SHOE GUIDE 25 Best New Models Tested & Rated

RUNNER'S WORLD

FIND YOUR FAST!

5 KEY SESSIONS TO SMASH A 5K

The Live-Longer Training Plan p15

RUN YOUR PERFECT MARATHON

15 Expert Pre-Race Tips

The Pint That Protects Your Heart p13

This Simple Trick Speeds Recovery p74

10 BEST FOODS FOR RUNNERS

EMILE CAIRESS

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MAY
2023

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EMILE CAIRESS
He may not be a household name yet – but he's already matched Sir Mo Farah's 10K road record and is planning to set new ones. So what's next for Britain's newest distance-running star?

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Runner: Emile Cairess

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EMILE WEARS: ADIDAS ADIZERO SINGLET; ADIDAS ADIZERO SPLIT SHORTS; ADIDAS ADIOS PRO 3 SHOES

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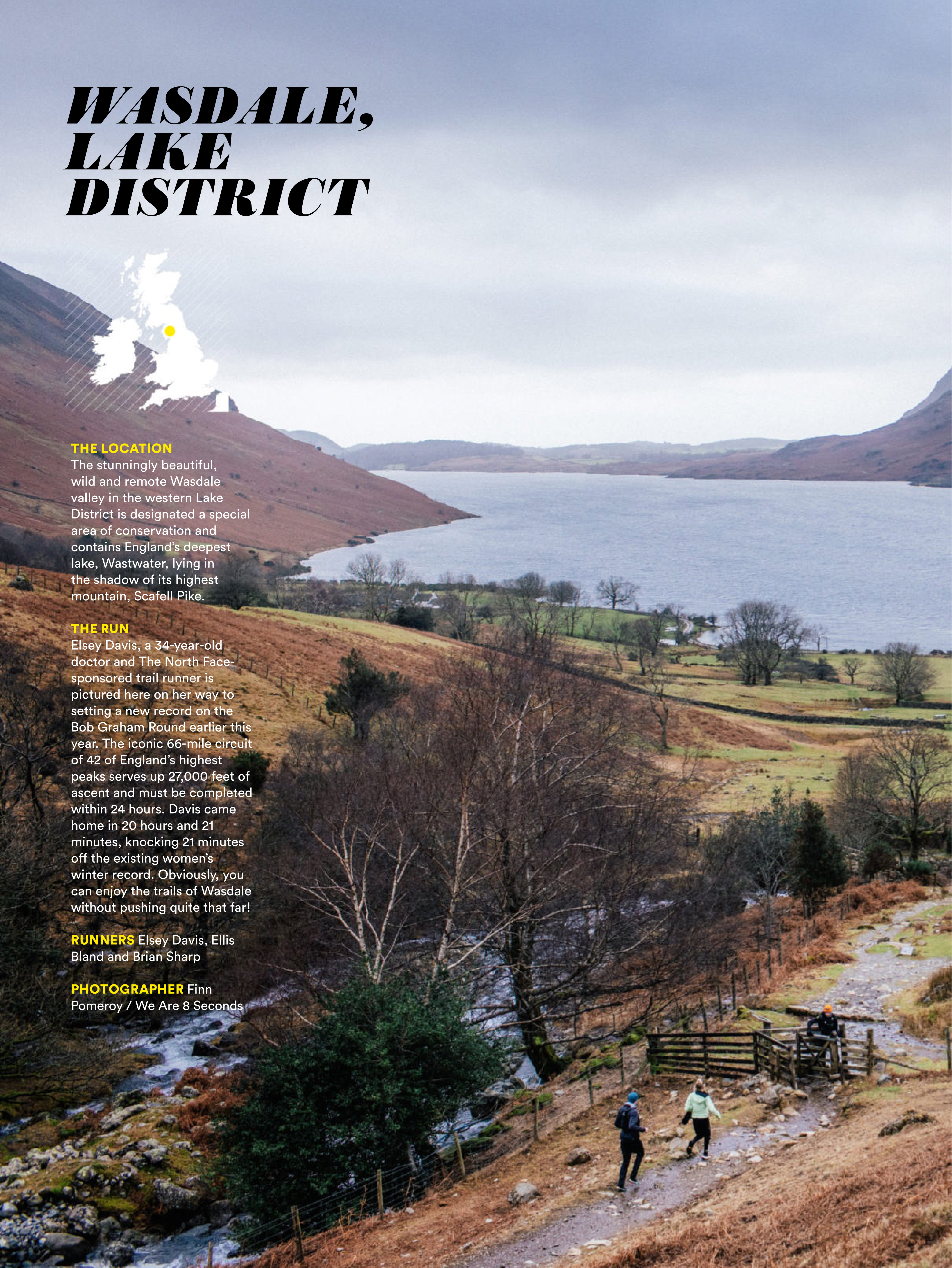
WASDALE, LAKE DISTRICT



THE LOCATION
The stunningly beautiful, wild and remote Wasdale valley in the western Lake District is designated a special area of conservation and contains England's deepest lake, Wastwater, lying in the shadow of its highest mountain, Scafell Pike.

THE RUN
Elsey Davis, a 34-year-old doctor and The North Face-sponsored trail runner is pictured here on her way to setting a new record on the Bob Graham Round earlier this year. The iconic 66-mile circuit of 42 of England's highest peaks serves up 27,000 feet of ascent and must be completed within 24 hours. Davis came home in 20 hours and 21 minutes, knocking 21 minutes off the existing women's winter record. Obviously, you can enjoy the trails of Wasdale without pushing quite that far!

RUNNERS Elsey Davis, Ellis Bland and Brian Sharp

PHOTOGRAPHER Finn Pomeroy / We Are 8 Seconds

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EDITOR'S LETTER

IN ORDER TO BE A HAPPY and fulfilled runner, it's important to understand your 'why' – to find the meaning that helps you stay motivated. And the subjects of three features in this issue illustrate how varied those meanings can be.

This month's cover runner, Emile Cairess, is one of the brightest British distance-running talents to emerge in recent years, and is certainly not short of ambition. But what's engaging about him is his simple approach (he trains with a Casio watch and says he eats what he likes) and how he's motivated by a love of running off-road and in nature. Read our compelling interview on page 58.

The four runners in our 'Last, But Not Least' feature on page 52 populate the opposite end of the field to Cairess, but their experience is no less meaningful. As one of these proud back-of-the-packers says, 'People at the back push themselves just as hard and are just as determined to finish the race as the competitive runners up front.' And coming from someone who has finished the 268-mile Spine Race, it's hard to argue.

Finally, on page 30, check out the inspirational story of Shoe4Africa founder Toby Tanser. He went to Kenya seeking training advice, but instead found a calling to help those less fortunate than himself by way of a series of fateful events – some fortuitous, others horrific. But now, having helped build the country's first public children's hospital, it's safe to say that Tanser has found his 'why'.

ANDY DIXON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF @RW_ed_Andy

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TOBIAS MEWS
The adventure athlete and author of *50 Races To Run Before You Die* has laced his trail shoes all over the planet. Near his home in the French Pyrenees, he guides us over the idyllic trails around Bagnères-de-Luchon. Check out the *Queen Of The Mountains* on **p38.**

COURTNEY RUBIN
Specialising in health, fitness and wellness, the freelance journalist has written for *The New York Times, Rolling Stone* and *Women's Health*. For us, she delves into the latest scientific thinking on a vital macronutrient for runners. Dig into *Protein 2.0* on **p46.**

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WARM-UPS

The TIPS YOU NEED *to* GET UP *to* SPEED

PERFORMANCE
PRAISE

Why it pays to praise

Here's another good reason to cheer on your fellow runners: it primes your body and mind for peak performance

IF YOU'RE ONE of those lovely types who encourages others, thanks marshals and generally makes the running world a better place to be, this new study is for you. Research from the University of San Diego suggests that such behaviour helps to safeguard your health and elevates your performance. The study found that colleagues who took time to bond – for example, thanking each other for their hard work – had healthier cardiovascular responses when exposed to stress. In fact, a single one- to two-minute expression of gratitude between teammates was enough to make a measurable difference, increasing their confidence and concentration, and leading to better all-round performance. So, next time you're training or racing with others, offer a word of encouragement – it pays dividends in the long run.

WORDS: SCARLETT WRENCH; RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER CROWTHER

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Event: Maverick Race, Exmoor
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FIND A RACE

Blocks clever

Could short 'blocks' of high-intensity training be the missing ingredient for superior fitness?

Quite possibly, according to a new study*. These 'microcycles' challenged the subjects, all elite athletes, with several days of tough training followed by several days of relative rest. Theoretically, a three or four-month marathon training plan could incorporate a number of such blocks. The 12 athletes in the study were cross-country skiers, whose VO_2 maxes were roughly equivalent to those of runners with 15-minute 5K PBs. Half the group maintained their normal training, while the other half did a six-day block of hard intervals, followed by five easy days. The results? Those who did block training improved more than the control group in a speed test, while in a sub-max test they had a lower heart rate and perceived effort level. 'Short, intense training blocks can be beneficial to runners, but they need to be approached with caution, matched to current fitness and experience, and placed carefully within a training plan,' says coach and ultrarunner Edwina Sutton.

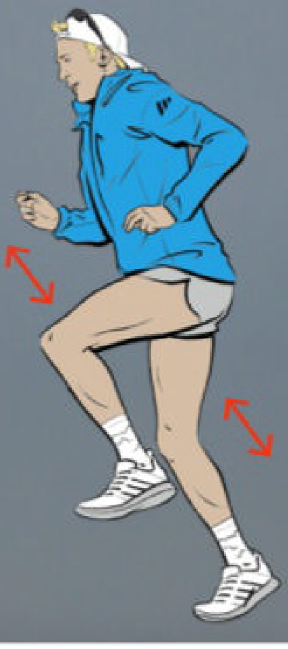
FANCY FOOTWORK
Learn to run like a pro

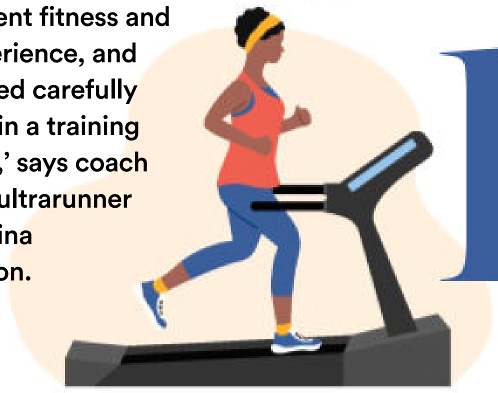
Run like an 'expert'

Faster runners tend to have two running-form characteristics in common

WHILE THERE IS NO universally accepted definition of good running form, a new paper* suggests that there are a couple of elements that separate 'expert' and 'novice' runners. When the researchers studied the form of a variety of runners, they found elites had a 'lower duty factor', meaning they spent less time on the ground, and also had 'less vertical oscillation', meaning they bounced less than the novice runners. Interestingly, this was true 'independent of running speed', which, in this case, was measured at both 10km/hr (9:40min/mile) and 15km/hr (6:26min/mile). Run more like an 'expert' with this exercise…

FAST FEET
Most people will be most efficient with a cadence that's somewhere between 170 and 185. Increase yours through this fast-feet drill: taking small, quick steps, and driving with your arms, move slowly forwards (think: running rapidly on the spot, but with just a little forwards motion).





12-3-30

One of the most googled workouts. Set a treadmill to a 12% incline and walk at a pace of 3 miles an hour for 30 mins. Too easy? Try 12-4-30.

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WHOLE AGAIN
Why full-fat milk is the whey to go

A fat lot of good for your heart

The debate over the healthiest form of milk has been going on longer than most people's marathon careers. Should the health-conscious runner buy skimmed, semi-skimmed or full-fat? The latest study* rules in favour of the latter. The paper notes that there are different sources of saturated fat, and each may produce different results. 'Males with higher intakes of dairy-derived saturated fats had a less atherogenic profile [fewer fatty deposits in arteries] than males with lower intakes of these fats,' said the study's authors. The effects were 'weaker in females' yet the point holds across genders: not all saturated fats are bad – the dairy variety might actually do you good.

The Green Med diet

The Mediterranean diet has often been heralded as one of the world's healthiest. But a new study* notes that even the healthiest diet has room for improvement – which brings us to the 'Green Med' diet. This is a slight tweak of the standard Mediterranean diet, which includes plenty of vegetables, seafood, fruits, legumes, whole grains and nuts. For the Green Med diet, you slightly cut down on red and processed meat, while also drinking three to four cups of green tea each day. Those who adopted these habits during the 18-day trial experienced a significantly greater reduction of stomach fat compared with the people who followed the standard Mediterranean diet.

300ml

Ingestion of 300ml of beer after you exercise 'does not affect HRV [heart rate variability] and cardiovascular parameters,' found one study*. In short, one bottle after a run is fine.

Net gains

A study* of people in their forties and fifties found a link between higher concentration of omega-3 fatty acids and a large hippocampus, the brain region responsible for learning and memory. Eating more omega-3s was also associated with an enhanced ability to understand more complex concepts. 'Studies have looked at this association in older populations,' said study lead Claudia Satizabal. 'The new contribution here is that, even at younger ages, if you have a diet that includes some omega-3 fatty acids, you're already protecting yourself against the brain ageing that we see at middle age.'

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: ROWAN FEE; GETTY IMAGES. SOURCES*: *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION; BMC MEDICINE; INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH & PUBLIC HEALTH; UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH CENTER AT SAN ANTONIO.*

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Grey area

New study finds optimal exercise routine for older runners

WHAT'S THE BEST exercise routine when you're over 65? A large-scale study* may have found the answer to that question. More than 115,000 older adults were followed for almost eight years in a bid to discover the combination of aerobic exercise and strength work that led to the best results in terms of longevity. With aerobic exercise, more was better. Those who did at least five hours a week had a 32% reduction in mortality risk. When it came to strength work, the story was a little different: the sweet spot was four to six sessions a week, which led to a 21% decrease in mortality risk. However, those who strength-trained seven or more times a week reduced their mortality risk by only 2%.

TAKE SOME YEARS OFF
Running is key

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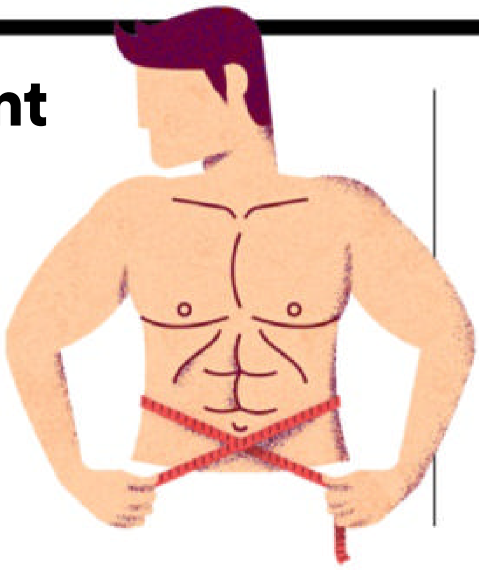
Brain games

There's plenty of data to support the idea that exercise helps our brains to function better. But a new study* went a step further and found that 'participants with similar physical activity habits and fitness profiles tended to also exhibit similar mental health and task performance profiles'. Put another way, the effect on the brain depends on the kind of workout you do.

With stress levels, for example, participants who reported higher levels of stress tended to be more active, while those doing light activity were less anxious. The researchers said, 'Engaging in one form or intensity of physical activity will not necessarily affect all aspects of cognitive or mental health equally.' The takeaway? Experiment with the kind of running that makes you feel happiest – it will be different for everyone.

Middle management

It's widely known that obesity adversely influences the central nervous system and cognitive function. A recent study* looked into which obesity indicator is more relevant to cognitive impairment. The results suggest that a higher waist to hip ratio (belly fat) is significantly associated with lower cognitive performance. Hip circumference, body mass index and body-fat percentage, on the other hand, were not shown to have a significant link with cognitive performance.



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The percentage of Brits who feel insecure about their bodies after viewing 'before' and 'after' social media images of people who transformed themselves through exercise*.

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Band aids

The best ways to deal with ITB syndrome

Alongside runner's knee and achilles tendinitis, ITB syndrome is one of the key afflictions that affects runners. It produces pain and stiffness on the outside edge of the knees, and can be particularly painful when running downhill. A new systematic review* looked at the most successful ways to deal with the injury. It concluded that 'deep transverse frictions' – ie, massage across the vertical line of the ITB – didn't seem to work and is 'not recommended'. Trigger point therapy – massage that helps to release tense, painful knots – decreased pain and improved function, while dry needling – ie, acupuncture – 'showed improvement in pain and limb function'.

Disaster planning

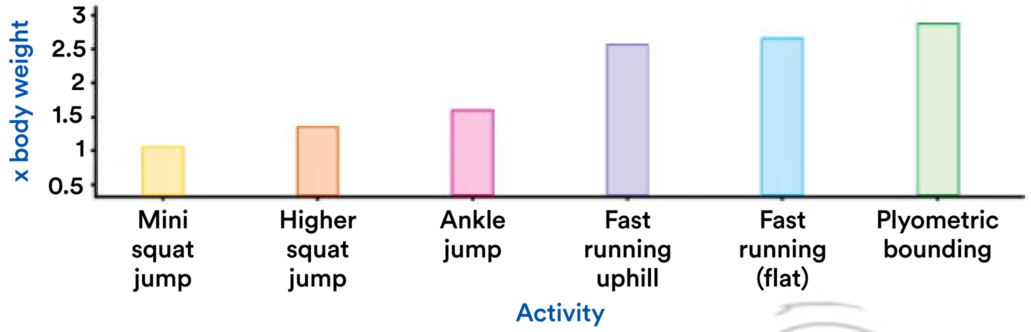
No one plans to have a hip or knee replacement. But sometimes it's unavoidable. One way of encouraging the best post-op outcome is to make leg-strengthening part of your weekly routine – now. A systematic review* found that the more strength work you do before, the better you fare after. 'Prehab efforts involving progressive resistance training provide an effective means to improve post-operative outcomes,' say researchers.

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; STUDIO 33. ILLUSTRATION: LIZZY THOMAS. SOURCES*: *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED HEALTH SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY; FRONTIERS IN SPORTS AND ACTIVE LIVING; JOURNAL OF APPLIED BIOMECHANICS*

Use the force

Knowing when and how to reduce ground reaction forces could help to keep you on the road – here's a guide

THE FORCE with which your body hits the ground with each step while running is called 'ground reaction force' (GRF, for short). The lower the force, the less likely you may be to experience impact-related injuries – a good thing to bear in mind if you're returning from a niggle. A new study into GRF provides useful insights. First, GRF is 2.46 (body weight) when you're running easy on flat ground. Downhill running is the major villain: GRF forces increase by 40% to 70%. But uphill running is a good option for anyone looking to add quality without the corresponding increase in GRF – running uphill fast results in a GRF of only 2.56 – just above easy running on the flat. Here are some other activities and their corresponding GRF scores...



When to skip skipping

Got an ankle injury? Don't be tempted to cross-train through skipping. According to a new study*, it produces more force around the ankles than running and, as a result, will likely make your injury worse. On the other hand, if you have a knee injury and would like to increase your ankle strength while it heals, skipping could work. Conclusion: skipping is a 'viable alternative to running if the primary goal is to reduce loading at the commonly injured patellofemoral joint'. Just don't do it with a damaged ankle.

COMMON PEOPLE p20 + ACE YOUR BASE p21

HUMAN ( ) RACE

NEWS, VIEWS, TRENDS *and* ORDINARY RUNNERS *doing* EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

THE LONG ROAD TO HAPPINESS

Through ultrarunning, Benjamin Davies has been able to heal the wounds of the past. ‘It’s like therapy,’ he says

GO THE DISTANCE Davies was drawn to ultrarunning as the focus is less on achieving fast times and more about simply making it to the finish line

‘IT’S LIKE THERAPY. WHEN YOU’RE RUNNING ALONG, IT’S EASIER TO TALK’

IT’S NOT THAT UNUSUAL for people to try ultrarunning these days. What’s definitely strange, however, is someone attempting an ultra as their first race of any kind.

‘I hate marathons,’ says Benjamin Davies. ‘They’re a distance where you have to push yourself; you have a pace in mind and you’ll be disappointed if you fall short of that. But give me a 50-miler or a 100-miler and I know that the goal is just getting to the end.’

Davies, from Stourbridge in the West Midlands, is a newcomer to running altogether, but he wasted no time in getting straight to the big challenges. He began pounding the pavement in March 2019, just to keep his wife company, who was doing a charity race for a children’s hospital. Within a year, he had struggled through a 40-mile ultra and entered the ballot for the Grand Union Canal Race, a 145-mile slog from the centre of Birmingham to Little Venice in London. That year’s race didn’t happen due to Covid, which he’s actually thankful for in hindsight. ‘I think it would’ve killed me,’ he says.

But by May 2021, he was on that start line and competing up to the 93-mile mark, where he could go no further. ‘I was just completely obliterated,’ he says. ‘My legs, my ankles, my tendons were just shot.’ The following year, he finally made it, finishing in 21st place with a time of 37:29:00. It’s been a steep learning curve that has left him certain that ultrarunning has changed his life overwhelmingly for the better. He’s an inspirational evangelist for the sport on social media, where he’ll share wise life advice alongside pictures of him and his mates all beardy, exhausted and smiling after epic weekend training runs.

‘You try telling people how good you can feel after running 90-odd miles and they think you’re making it up. Even to myself sometimes, it’s incomprehensible. I’d hate to drive to London, never mind run it. But in that race, after 140 miles, I honestly felt like if the finish line had been 200 miles, I could probably have pushed to that distance,’ he says.

That superpowered feeling has been hard earned. Davies grew up with a father who could be great fun but was also physically abusive to him, his mother and his brother. One day, he had to be collected early from school after being sick in the toilets due to concussion. He was bullied because of his weight. More recently, his niece, who had suffered from health complications since birth, died at just 18 months old. These experiences left him extremely fragile mentally.

What were his coping mechanisms prior to discovering running? ‘Drink,’ he says bluntly. He’s been sober since autumn 2021. He also found brief comfort through overspending, becoming fixated on something that needed money throwing at it. At one point, he bought a couple of Funko Pop! figurines because he liked the Star Wars ones. Within a year, he owned more than 500. ‘I would track down a rare one, get a little endorphin rush, it would be put on a shelf and I’d go back to feeling rubbish again.’

When his niece’s death left him in a particularly bad place, a friend gave him the book *Can’t Hurt Me* by David Goggins, a former US Navy Seal who has completed numerous endurance challenges. ‘It gave me a kick up the backside, which really helped,’ he says. ‘That’s when I started searching for ultramarathons online. My whole life, I’d thought a marathon was the longest distance you could do.’

These races are famous for being even more of a trial for the mind than the body. If someone is already mentally delicate, why wouldn’t it break them? ‘I used to be a very, very emotional runner,’ he admits. ‘I couldn’t go on a long run without there being tears at some point. But it always manifested itself with a positive twist. I would think about the spark that my niece left in everyone who knew her.’

He’s found that running a long way with friends enables them all to support each other. He loves the African proverb: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.’ He likes the idea of fellow runners helping each other rather than competing. ‘It’s like therapy, when you’re running along, not looking straight at each other. It’s easier to talk. And everyone’s hurting the same, so you can unpackage that together.’

For the past two years, he and his friends have organised a ‘24-hour parkrun’ at their local course, Cannock Chase. Rather than being a competition, it was simply an opportunity for people to turn up at any time, run or walk as far as they wanted and have someone to talk to along the way. ‘No distance, no pace, but if you need to come and talk, there are a few of us there to listen.’

Next, he fancies trying to set a fastest known time for the length of the River Severn, about 220 miles. But in the end, mind-boggling distances or not, this isn’t really about the miles. He’s found a way to live, and it works.

Twitter: @bearthestampede
Instagram: @bearthestampede_runs

WORDS: DAVID SMYTH

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

THE RUNNERS OF WIMBLEDON COMMON

Lauriston Runners Club provides the perfect base for all-night ultrarunning and cross-country pursuits

WITH A HISTORY ENTWINED with the origins of cross-country, Lauriston Runners Club is a hidden gem on the south side of Wimbledon Common. Founded by war veteran Arthur Whitehead in 1966, the club has unique premises housed in a 17th century cottage.

'One of the beautiful things is that members get a key to the cottage,' says committee member Maximillian Dew. 'Having access to these facilities is a game-changer, especially when I'm training for an ultra and I'm out on the common all hours of the day and night,'

Community is at the heart of the club, with the cottage now owned by the trustees after they were vested the building by Whitehead in 1978.

A remarkable man, Whitehead was invalided out of the army towards the end of the Second World War after being hit by shrapnel during the invasion of Normandy. 'His right hand was very badly damaged and his lungs were damaged and they used to say he only had one,' says club trustee Pete Bull, who hung up his running shoes last year at the age of 93. 'But his lung expanded and recovered because of running.' Whitehead was 'extraordinarily tough' and 'never admitted to pain', according to Bull. Despite his injuries, when he returned from the war, Whitehead took up distance running, coming in the top 10 of the London to Brighton 54-mile race.

During this time, he lived in one of four cottages in the extensive gardens of Lauriston House, which was owned by his stepfather, Sir Arthur Fell. The main house was famous for having been the home of William Wilberforce in the late 1700s, a politician who led the campaign to abolish slavery.

When Whitehead rekindled his schooldays love of running, he began meeting up with other runners at the cottages. They would set off over the common and, very soon, Whitehead began to regain his strength. Wimbledon had particular significance within the running community, being regarded as the birthplace of cross-country after hosting the first ever one-mile intra-club steeplechase in December 1867.

'There was always a pack running on a Sunday morning. Some of us would run 20 miles or more. It's still a wonderful place for running,' says Bull, who started running with Whitehead from the cottages in 1959.

For years, Whitehead would invite fellow runners to change in his cottage, wash in his bath and enjoy tea and biscuits in his sitting room. In the late 1970s, he converted the last of the four cottages into a changing room, toilets and showers, plus a weights room.

Members still regularly use the facilities and the club now has more than 50 members, with separate facilities for female runners.

The club's motif remains a stag's head, which was part of Whitehead's family crest. He felt this was appropriate due to members running so much in Richmond Park, which lies next to Wimbledon Common and is famed for its deer.

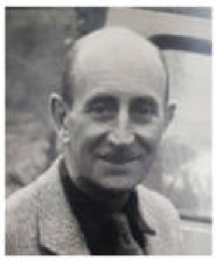
The premises is maintained via membership subs and generous donations from members, including a recent £25,000 bestowment.

'Members participate in the upkeep of the building,' says Bull. 'A member cleans the facilities each week and we paint the walls each year. We have also planted trees, bushes and plants outside.'

And the highlight of the club calendar is the annual Paarlauf held on Christmas Day since 1954. The 30-minute paired-running format – which became popular in Germany after the Second World War – is a friendly competition with an A and B runner decided by the committee.

Over the years, the club has supported a number of world record holders, including Gordon Pirie, Dave Bedford and Steve Ovett, who all ran with Whitehead across the common.

lauristonrunners.club


ARTHUR WHITEHEAD founded the Lauriston Runners Club in 1966

WORDS: LILY CANTER

Murphy's Lore

BY SAM MURPHY

I'M GOING BACK TO BASICS TO BUILD A BASE

ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI

Lots of runners are gearing up for marathons this month, but my running has a different focus; rather than preparing for racing, I'm preparing for training. Covid – the illness itself, the lack of exercise during it and the slow road to recovery – took a hefty bite out of my fitness. So, I've gone back to basics or, in running parlance, 'base training'. It was Arthur Lydiard, the legendary New Zealand coach, who first conceptualised training as a pyramid with 'aerobic base' at the bottom, giving rise to the term.

You could regard base training as only necessary for runners who are starting out, or, like me, returning after a break, regardless of the cause. Not so. In fact, following a racing season or 'peak' race, most professional runners take some recovery time and then resume training with a base phase. Picture Lydiard's pyramid and it's easy to see why: the broader the base, the higher the peak can be.

The overarching principle of base training is laying a foundation of aerobic endurance, on which you can later build speed and race-specific training. As US coach Pete Magill puts it: 'Run first, train later.'

The idea is to gradually increase weekly mileage, going further or longer per run, or running more frequently (or a mix of both). Pace isn't a concern. It's good to remember that if you feel stressed that your 'minutes per mile' isn't up to par.

There's no set volume that you must attain, whatever you might read to the contrary. (It's often claimed that Lydiard suggested all runners should build up to 100 miles per week, but this is a myth.) The end goal depends on what your starting point is and what your running aspirations are. Once you've reached a level of mileage that's comfortable, manageable and appropriate for your running goals, you can focus on a race distance, be it 5K or full marathon.

With no speed reps and lactate threshold sessions, the base phase is the ideal time to build – or rebuild – a strong foundation of strength. When I began to do this as I was coming out of Covid, I was surprised how far my general conditioning had slipped. If I'm honest, it wasn't just because of illness, it was because I'd let strength work fall by the wayside – so, in a way, it was a blessing to have it drawn to my attention. I progressed to a daily strength and conditioning workout of 10 to 20 minutes, and a couple of months on, I'm noticing the benefits on the roads and trails.

The final component of base training is neuromuscular (relating to the communication pathways between the brain and the muscles). Think of it as fine-tuning your running engine; an efficient neuromuscular system improves running economy so that you can run quicker for the same energy expenditure. Drills, very short hills, strides and sprints are great ways of honing neuromuscular efficiency – and they add challenge and interest to a period where nearly all your mileage is slow and steady. They also ensure that when you leave the base phase, your legs aren't strangers to fast work.

See base training as an opportunity rather than a chore. Yes, it can be dispiriting to feel like you're 'starting again'. But prolonged time off wipes the slate clean, giving you the chance to make the best possible return to form – or even become a better runner. In essence, it's about getting fit enough to cope with the training you need to reach your goals. Achieve that and you'll truly hit the ground running.

---

sam-murphy.co.uk

THE TAKEAWAY...

How to build a good base over six weeks:

- **Run at a pace at which you can hold a conversation without getting breathless**
- **Don't worry about distance, focus on consistency**
- **Aim for 20 to 50 mins per run, three to five days a week, for the first three weeks. No long runs are necessary**
- **Include some strength training in the first three weeks but no neuromuscular training**
- **Over the next three weeks, gradually increase the duration and/or frequency of your runs, as feels appropriate**
- **Introduce neuromuscular training for the second half of the six weeks**

Your World

LETTER OF THE MONTH

RHYTHM & GRIT
A FRESH TAKE ON MAXIMISING YOUR RUNNING ENJOYMENT
BY CORY WHARTON-MALCOLM
TRAINING
TIME ON YOUR SIDE

PUP AND LEVEL UP Running changed Ceri's life

RW IS TOP DOG

I just want to say a big thank you; we've been on a journey you are unaware of until now. Nine years ago, I was overweight and miserable, suffering terrible postnatal depression, having never run a step in my life. It took me buying *Runner's World* on a whim and several weeks of reading it before I got out the door – and I've never looked back. You've changed my mindset; I've lost weight and my mental health improved. Fast forward to now: I'm a personal trainer and qualified running coach – and I owe you a massive thank you. You've been there every step of the way! And you'll be in my thoughts in April when I run London. Here is my pooch Harley – also a massive fan!

Ceri Davies

RW Ceri, you're more than welcome. We're delighted to have played a role in your running journey – but never forget that it's you who's put in the work.

WIN!

What's inspired, impressed or annoyed you lately about running or runners? The writer of the winning email or letter receives a pair of Saucony Triumph 20s, worth £155 (available in a colour of your choosing, if in stock).

RUNNER'S WORLD, House of Hearst,
30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ
Email letters@runnersworld.co.uk
Twitter and Facebook @runnersworlduk

NEVER TOO OLD TO RUN

I enjoyed Richard Askwith's article on 'The Race Against Time' (March 23). But I'm not sure that a 63-year-old youngster is qualified to write about this topic. In Oxford, the Silver Joggers group started in 2014, in partnership with Oxford City Council's physical activity team, with the aim of helping older people to keep fit and active. We are now part of RunTogether and, each week, typically 20 to 30 runners – many of us in our mid-seventies – gather for a 5km run. There is no reason why most older people shouldn't take up, or keep up, jogging at a steady pace in good company. And, as Askwith so clearly explains, by so doing we are all improving our likely healthy lives enormously.

Keith Frayn

RW Glad you enjoyed the penmanship of young whippersnapper Richard Askwith. All master runners, elite or otherwise, are doing themselves a world of good – and inspiring some younger folk along the way, too.

NO REPLY

During my early morning runs along the coast road of Brighton and Hove, which are often wet, cold and dark, it's fair to say I don't see a huge amount of other runners. When I do, however, I give a friendly smile and more often than not a wave as we pass each other. Only 25% bother to acknowledge me. More often, eyes are fixed firmly on the ground or, worse still, I'm totally blanked. Compare this to my regular weekly outings on the bike when other cyclists are all too keen to give a nod or wave. Perhaps runners are just shy. Either way, give it a go on your next run and see what response you get; you may prove the results of my mini-survey wrong!

Leigh Brandt

STAY YOUNG Keith and the Silver Joggers

NO NEED FOR SPEED

I've never minded that I have gone from a 9 min/miler to a 13 min/miler due to being diagnosed with lupus and lems myasthenia. I'm often last these days but I'm just so grateful I can still run. Keep on running, everyone. Speed is not all that counts.

Debbie Pentland

RW Well said, Debbie. It's a philosophy exemplified by the runners in our 'Last But Not Least' feature on p52.

SHOE TECH DOESN'T STAND STILL

It's 25 years since I bought bulky, stabilising running shoes for my first half marathon. 'No one's going to be looking at your feet,' the salesperson reassured me. It's been fun watching the running shoe develop since then, leading to the carbon-plated shoes that Haile Gebrselassie says gain elite marathon runners at least three minutes ('The Legend', April 23). Yet the shoes that carried Gebrselassie to numerous championships in the 90s already had huge advantages over those Johnny Hayes wore in the 1908 Olympic marathon ('The Forgotten Champion', April 23). For the planet, let's hope *RW* readers in the future look back in bewilderment at today's use of non-renewables, before lacing up our 2,000-plus mile shoes made of castor beans, eucalyptus and sugar cane ('Are Shoes Really Getting Greener?', April 23).

Kate Comisso

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. ILLUSTRATION: SON OF ALAN

WE ASK, YOU ANSWER

WHAT'S THE WORST PIECE OF RUNNING ADVICE YOU'VE EVER BEEN GIVEN?

62
GO OUT FAST

'Get gait analysis. No thanks, I trust my feet' *Jen O'Callaghan*

'Don't join a club; they're all super fast and running snobs' *Neil Macdonald*

'Run slow to go fast. There's some truth there but so over-simplified' *Simon Martin*

'Just slow down, don't ever walk' *Kathryn McKenzie*

'You need to run for over 20 minutes to get in the fat-burning zone' *Anastasios Makris*

'Pretty sure I can win this: when running downhill, to go faster, put your hands in your pockets' *Kay Heinecke*

'Just run as fast as you can from the start and see how long you can hold it for' *Bobby Willett*

'Run through the pain' *Marianne McKay*

'Don't do it, it's bad for your knees' *PT Reynolds*

'Change to forefoot running: it's more efficient and an easy transition… not after heel-striking for 20 years, it's not' *Chris Farmer*

SNAP CHAT

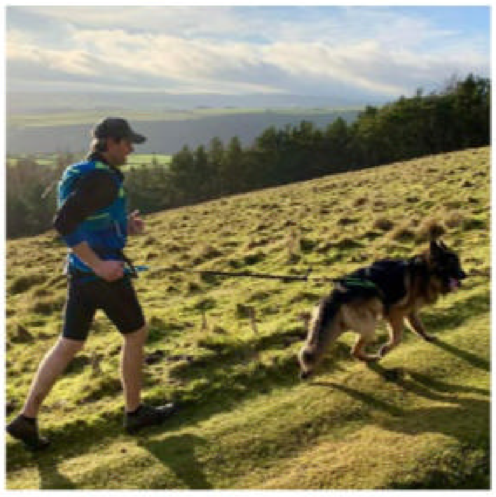
#TOPDOG

SHOW US A PIC OF YOUR FAVOURITE FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND

NEXT MONTH: #GROUPSHOT SHOW US A PIC OF YOU WITH YOUR FAVOURITE RUNNING BUDDIES

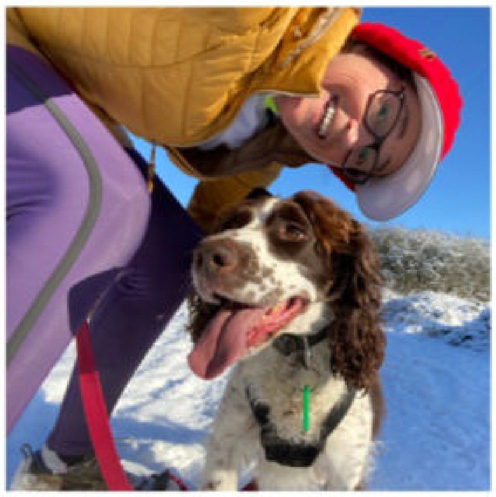
LETTERS@RUNNERSWORLD.CO.UK

'Reggie after his first canicross race (he didn't actually win)' ***Bridie Rowlands***



'Obi and I running in the Peak District' ***J Riley***

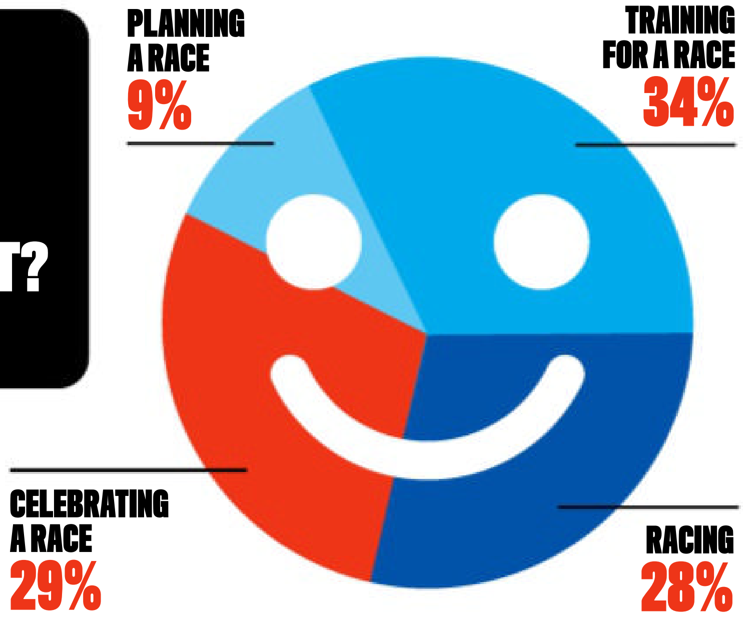
'Nero and I were in front… for the first 100m' ***James Shea***



'Regan, my rescue spaniel. Snow doesn't stop us' ***Theresa Slater***

POLL

WHEN ARE YOU HAPPIEST?



***Based on a RW Twitter poll of 266 votes**

BY THE NUMBERS

GARY McKEE

53, CUMBRIA, RAN 365 MARATHONS IN 365 DAYS

THERE ARE RUN STREAKS. And then there is the decision to run a marathon every day for a calendar year. That's what 53-year-old Gary McKee vowed to do in 2022 – and, somehow, he managed it. It helps that McKee is an experienced marathoner with a glittering CV of multi-day challenges. But still, it's a bewilderingly ambitious thing to attempt. Fuelling McKee's marathons was a desire to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support – something that he traces back to his father Victor's cancer diagnosis in 1997. His father died in 2005 from an unrelated illness, but McKee's fundraising lives on. 'Everyone has been affected, either directly or indirectly, by cancer,' he says. 'Charities suffered big time during the Covid years, so I wanted to show them my support.' Due to the boxes that have to be ticked by Guinness World Records, McKee's achievement will not be an official world record. But he doesn't care. 'This isn't about records,' he says. 'This is about helping people.'

TO DONATE, VISIT
justgiving.com/fundraising/threesixfive

300

When McKee took part in his first London Marathon, in 2015, he ran to the city from his home in Cleator Moor, a distance of approximately 300 miles

354th

THE MARATHON ON WHICH GARY, A RUGBY LEAGUE FANATIC, WAS JOINED BY FORMER PRO KEVIN SINFIELD

GILBERT
MATCH-XV

110

NUMBER OF MARATHONS ON CONSECUTIVE DAYS McKEE COMPLETED IN 2021, AGAIN FOR MACMILLAN

9,563

Number of miles McKee covered in 2022 – the equivalent of running from the UK to Australia

183.4

Number of miles McKee was running each week

£1,164,816

The staggering amount of money McKee raised for Macmillan and Hospice at Home West Cumbria. Bravo!

6AM

The time at which McKee began most of his marathons. He'd begin work, as a team leader at nuclear site Sellafield, in the afternoon

860

Approximate number of miles from Land's End to John O'Groats, completed by McKee in 2011

1

SERIOUS CASE OF HAMSTRING TENDINITIS. 'BUT YOU HAVE TO EXPECT INJURIES WHEN DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS,' HE SAYS

20

NUMBER OF PAIRS OF TRAINERS GONE THROUGH

WORDS: RICK PEARSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARLOS REINA/PLATINUM LIVE. ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; STUDIO 33

Tonky Talk

BY PAUL TONKINSON

FINISHING YOUR FIRST RACE IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

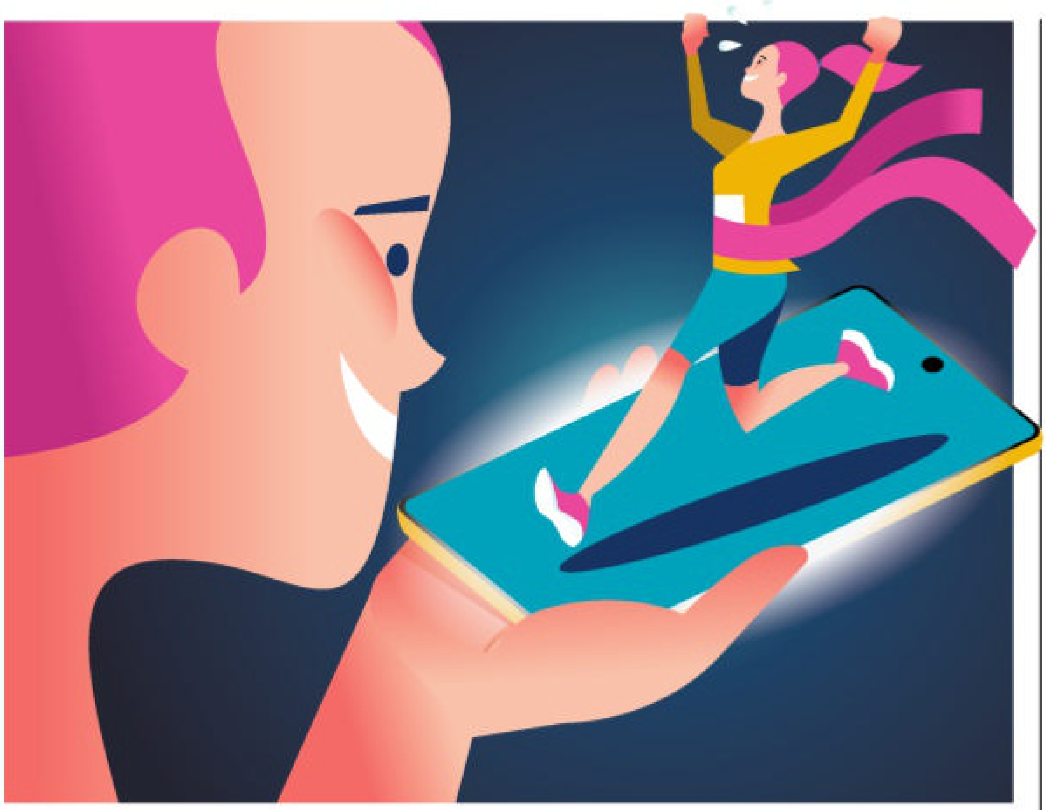


ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI

Last month, I talked about Bonnie, my daughter, recently out of hospital and determined to run a marathon. I'd convinced her to run a 10K instead to see if she really enjoyed running. I'd also said I'd go and support her.

Reader, I didn't. A work offer came in and, given the current financial situation, I just had to take it and keep up with her race experience from afar via my phone.

The race – a hilly trail 10K – was going to be testing. Her training had been limited, involving lots of gym but not much actual running. The morning of the race was a bombardment of photos on the family WhatsApp. A windswept, drizzly Yorkshire scene, my daughter grinning in tracksuit and headphones.

The race started at 10am. I carried on with my Saturday morning business. My phone rang at 10.45am – Bonnie. I picked up.

'Dad!' she blurted. 'I hate it! My legs are hurting! It's raining. I'm freezing!'

'Where are you in the race?'

'About 7km. I hate it!'

I tried to calm her down. Is the pain acute? 'Yes. No. I don't know.' Did you warm up? 'Yes, for ages.' Can you run? 'No chance – it hurts too much.' Why not try stretching for a bit and then running, slowly. Long pause. 'Old people are overtaking me! With dogs! I feel so stupid. I'm right at the back.'

'Listen,' I said. 'Don't feel stupid. It's your first race. It can be hard, but you've started now, the best thing to do is just start running slowly, if you can, and just finish. That's the only aim. That's a win.'

'I hate this!' The phone call ends.

At 11.30am, I get a text, 'Finished!' I ring her, expecting to have to lift her up mood-wise. I took a deep breath. 'How are you feeling, love?'

'Smashed it! It was *so* good!' She babbled on excitedly for the next 10 minutes. It had been tough, but she'd kept going. She'd started running again and finished strongly. They'd given her a medal and a T-shirt; the whole thing had been brilliant.

It was an incredible turnaround and, I must admit, my wife and I found it very funny. Later, we laughed at the 'smashed it' comment. What was this generation thinking? So delusional. It pointed to the ridiculousness of younger people's mindset and the 'everyone's a winner' philosophy.

That night, she sent us a video of the finish. Just her, no other runner in sight, jogging over the line with a huge smile on her face, being cheered on by a mate. The more I watched it, the more moving I found it, the more I thought I could learn something from her. I had been projecting my own experience as a runner on to her. We have different lives. She has a difficult full-time job working with autistic kids. The fact that halfway round she was regretting the whole thing doesn't negate her joy at the end. If anything, it intensifies it. She'd been in the moment, charting completely new territory. Why not be happy? Why not celebrate?

It's an incredible achievement to finish your first race; it had been tough and she'd finished strongly. There's a fire in her. She *had* smashed it.

Maybe at the root of it, given we're all different and bring our own lives to every race, everyone *is* a winner.

That's why they give you a medal.

Paul is a stand-up comedian and co-host of the *Running Commentary* podcast

RUNNING GAGS

by Rick Pearson

Q. When taking part in a trail race, should I hold open the gate for the next runner?

A. This is a good idea, unless you happen to be in last position, in which case you may be waiting a long time.

Q. During an ultramarathon, is it best to fuel on real food?

A. Yes, real food is both tastier and more calorific than imaginary food, though slightly heavier to carry.

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The Flamingo Diaries

BY LISA JACKSON

SLEEP WELL, LITTLE SISTER. YOUR MEMORY LIVES ON

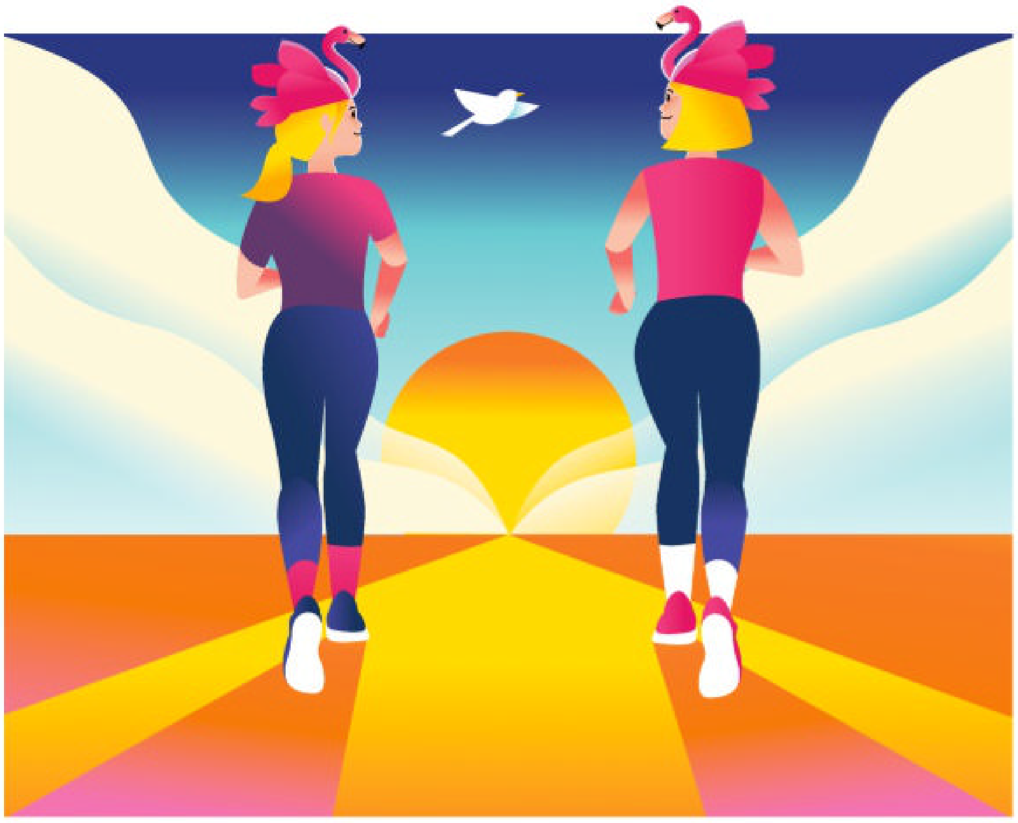


ILLUSTRATION: PIETARI POSTI

My little sister Loren is dead. The mischievous, chubby-cheeked sibling I baked mud pies with, bunked off school to skateboard with and ran three marathons with is no longer running a life in parallel with mine. The gifted woman who lived by the mantra 'nothing is impossible' is, impossible as it is for me to believe, gone. Her death struck me like lightning, and was mercifully quick, almost pain-free.

When her grieving husband, Ernest, flew out to see me, he reminded me of a quote by William 'Braveheart' Wallace, 'Every man dies, not every man really lives.' As I reflected on this, I realised that although my thoughts naturally gravitated towards Loren's death, it was far more comforting to celebrate how much living she packed into her 53 years. She'd backpacked through Europe for a year on the tightest of budgets, and despite her insane work schedule had visited more than 70 countries. She'd taken care of Dad for four years while still finding time to throw fabulous parties. And she'd run more than 30 marathons, from Athens to Soweto, going so overboard with fancy dress and face paint at the Médoc Marathon that she resembled a fluorescent Caribbean cocktail.

Loren also inspired me to run South Africa's 56-mile Comrades Marathon by doing it twice, accompanied by her then-boyfriend, Wayne, and Bruce, a friend who'd had one of his calf muscles bitten off by a great white shark. She once even finished Comrades with no training at all (she nearly died of hyponatraemia, but that's another story). She told me, 'Running an ultra is like angling in a lake teeming with fish. Entering the race – whether you truly believe you can finish it or not – is like casting a baited hook. Once you've done that, you'll definitely get a bite and then it's the fish that reels you in, not the other way round.'

My sister's inspiration didn't end there. After I entered Comrades, she was a source of invaluable advice: 'It's a waste to run up hills – you won't get to the top any faster than by walking'; 'Break it into biteable chunks: it's just three 30Ks, and each 30K is just six 5Ks'; and 'Drink water for the first 30K, sports drink for the next 30K, then treat yourself to Coke for the final 30K – the caffeine and sugar will ensure you finish on a high.'

But the most memorable thing Loren taught me came from a photo that took pride of place in our family album: it's of her grimacing as she ran up Inchanga, one of the race's toughest hills. I vowed never to pass a photographer without a grin on my face; I was fearful that having a permanent reminder of just how agonising races can be would put me off ever running another one again.

Loren didn't just talk the talk, she walked (or ran) the walk, flying out to Seville to help me through my Comrades qualifier, where I slashed 40 minutes off my PB. When the day of the race came, she donned the flappable flamingo hat I'd gifted her and gently squeezed my hand as we sang *Shosholoza* (a song for solidarity) and South Africa's national anthem. She DNF'd that year, but her spirit guided all my steps to the finish line.

'Some candles simply burn faster and brighter than others,' Ernest, who has vowed to run Comrades in her memory, told me. 'Loren was one of the brightest.' Sleep well, little sister – your memory lives on in our hearts.

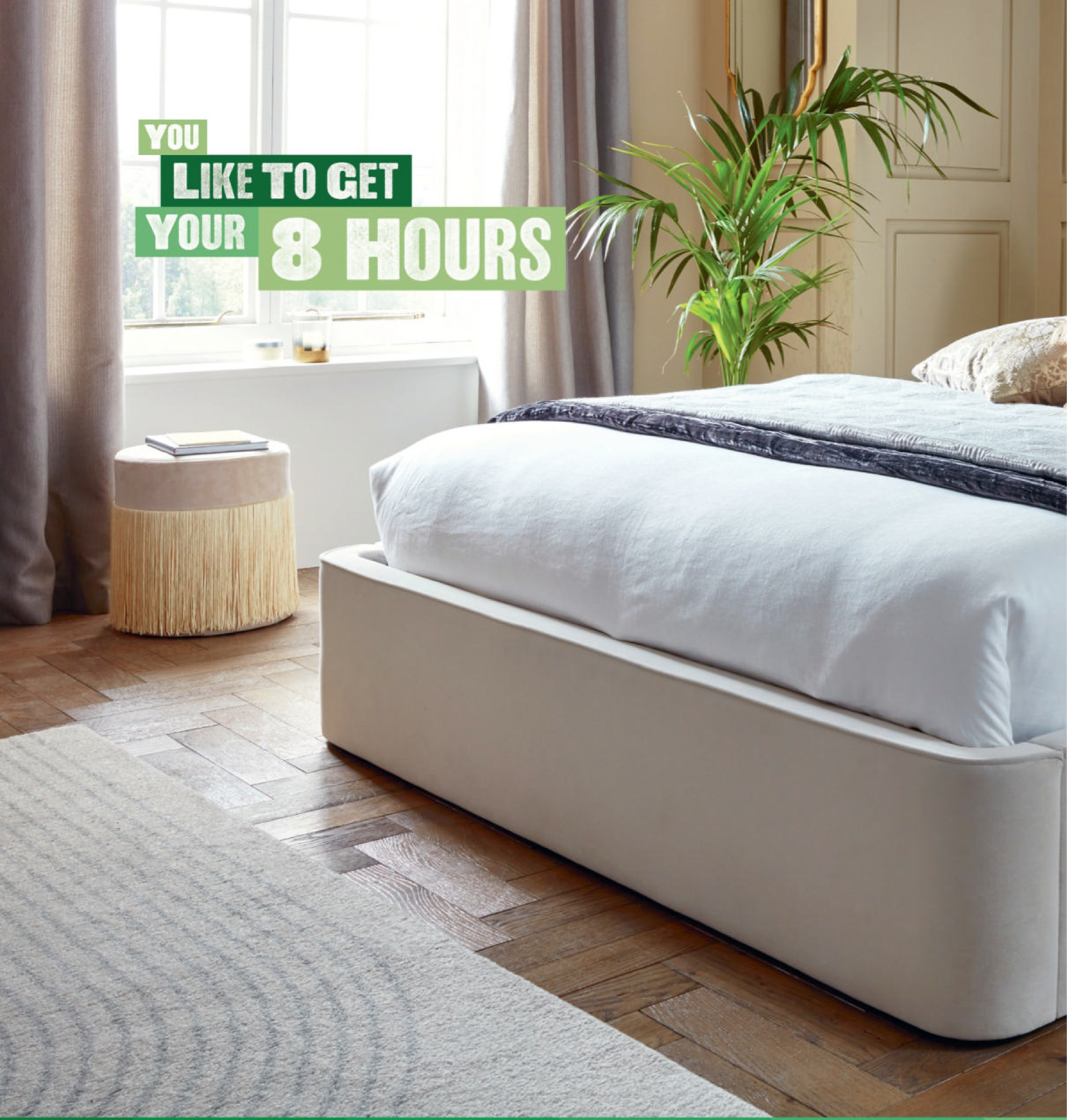
Lisa is a bestselling author and her latest books – *Travel Seekness* and *Travel Agents* – contain chapters about running and have been released as audiobooks

WORDS TO GIVE YOU WINGS

'We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons.'

My sister was fond of quoting these words from American motivational speaker Jim Rohn. They remind us that going out for a training run will always be less painful than feeling guilty about not having done so.

YOU LIKE TO GET YOUR 8 HOURS



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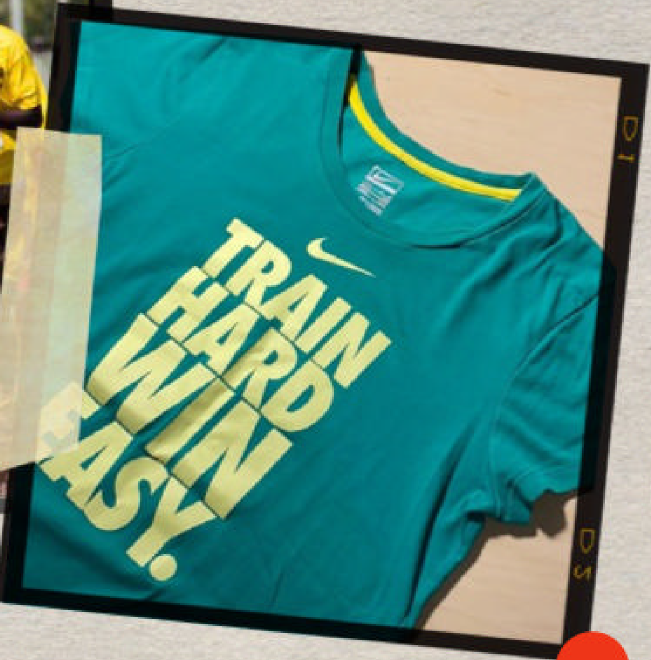
779
972


TRAIN HARD WIN EASY.

Running with destiny

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I CAN...

Born in 1968, Toby Tanser grew up in Sheffield. He begins running at school and, aged 12, he joins Hallamshire Harriers and competes in the English Schools' Athletics Championships. After leaving school, he travels for a few years before moving to Iceland to live with his uncle at the age of 21. There, he enters a race as a bet with his cousin to win a beer. Instead, he wins the race and secures a sponsorship deal with Nike. Athletic success follows as he wins races in Iceland and Sweden and competes against some of the European circuit's leading runners. In 1995, Tanser decides to visit Kenya for warm-weather training and to learn from Kenyan runners. But the trip gets off to a bad start – he doesn't book ahead and, on arrival in Nairobi, his luggage goes missing. After asking a taxi driver to take him to a place where runners frequent, he's taken to a run-down hotel. Waking after a night of broken sleep and mosquito bites, he chooses to return home immediately. But before going to the airport, he decides to go for a run.

I must have looked an odd sight – a thin white man in jeans clomping up the road, beetroot-faced and wheezing in the elevated altitude. Woefully, this route was the commuters' direct line in and out of Nairobi.

Peeking at my stopwatch and convincing myself the constant jeering didn't bother me, I aimed to run back to the hotel and end this pity party. Then, in the 19th minute, as I scanned for a suitable turnround marker, I almost screamed with joy. One hundred metres ahead were 20, perhaps 30, Kenyan runners. Like prancing stallions, they paraded across the road and then galloped down a bushy path.

I raced to latch on to the group. Surprisingly, the athletes neither acknowledged my presence nor gestured me away and I seized this as an invitation to tag along. After a couple of miles of running, cresting a hill, the men ground to a stop before a spacious field. Several enormous weather-beaten tents stood pitched as a camp. Streams of athletes sauntered around the tents, garbed in a variety of tracksuits or T-shirts. The runner closest, Moses Tanui, grinned and extended a hand, 'Karibu [welcome] to our camp. And who exactly are you?'

The athletes urged me to join them and dig into brunch. Luckily, I'd stumbled upon arguably the greatest distance-running group on the globe. Here navy, air force and army runners dwelt – 300 to 400 of Kenya's swiftest men. Any thoughts of returning to Sweden vanished immediately.

I discovered the location of the camp to be Ngong. Although a recent addition to the military sports programme, the camp's living conditions were spartan. The giant tents contained row upon row of functional but uncomfortable metal bunks. Strings tethered between the inner tent poles supported lines of weather-bleached running clothes. Personal space was limited, and each man owned a tin-metal chest for his few possessions. No gym, treadmill or even an exercise bike stood at the camp. As for sporting equipment, all I unearthed was a car tyre for jumping exercises and a wrought-iron bar as long as a broom handle with concrete blocks at each end improvising for barbells. Ngong was by no means a state-of-the-art training centre, and yet the venue produced world-beaters nonetheless. Kenya turned out to be a runner's nirvana.

Following an afternoon run, an athlete pulled me aside. Would I visit his family? Why not, I thought, and I accepted the invitation. The name of his town was Kibera. He had failed to mention that the location is the largest slum in east Africa.

Travelling over five continents, I've witnessed poverty, but what I encountered in Kibera shook my senses. Walking

'ALL OF US ARE RUNNING FOR MONEY. WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION'

HALLAMSHIRE
30
HARRIERS
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Above: Toby Tanser went to Kenya for some warm-weather training but wound up finding a much greater calling, which became his mission back in New York **Above right:** Tanser competed at a national level as a young boy **Below right:** Kibera, east Africa's largest slum, was Tanser's home for a short period

into a sprawling mound of makeshift mud-and-iron-sheet shacks, stacked closer than rust-coloured dominoes, I wondered how on earth this jumbled mess even functioned.

We arrived at the place Michael's parents called home. The welcome was genuine, enthusiastic and extremely loud. Inside the shelter, the smell of the paraffin lamp burning oil-soaked wicks partially blocked the stench of rotting garbage and sewage outside. Although the hut carried the dimensions of a decent-sized living room, around 15 of us managed to cram together and settle by the central cooking space.

The shanty town served as my home for the week. Like a sponge, I tried to soak up and comprehend how this society functioned without income and support. The resilient souls of Kibera didn't allow birthright to drag them down. People were determined to conquer the overwhelming odds against them, not wistfully praying for a transformation, and acting to improve their circumstances. Poverty in life didn't lead to poverty of the soul.

Back in Ngong, the team travelled for a competition. We climbed aboard an ancient open-backed army truck to drive to Machakos. Squatting on the unforgiving wood benches with around 30 athletes, I chatted to Christopher Kelong and Joshua Che'langa. Both men had the same question, 'Why do you run?' I knew my answers would be pathetically weak. To feel good, or because I can travel and meet interesting people. Embarrassed to reply, I bounced the question to Chris.

'Money, all of us are running for money,' he replied. 'Because we have no other options. Look around the camp; no one owns skills apart from running. None of us can establish a business; our parents are subsistence farmers. Villages will support you to run because, if you make it, you become the bank manager. We run as it's the road out of poverty.'

On the start line, a TV camera swept the line of runners as we awaited our final instructions. The lens panned from my feet to those of my fellow runners. Suddenly, a fabulous idea popped into my mind. The shoes stacked in rows underneath my kitchen table could furnish a substantial number of the front row of runners. Why not donate my surplus gear to needy athletes? When the gun boomed, I grinned, imagining how I could help boost the lives of these hard-working souls. The following day, I telephoned my friend Lasse Jonsson. Could he collect the shoes and piles of running gear strewn around my apartment and airmail the boxes to Kenya?

Before long, I received notification that the shoes had arrived. Dividing the donations, I dispatched boxes to the camp in Ngong and dispersed others to the training group in Iten. Lasse had supplemented my gear with a club whip-round, and I could supply shoes to an Eldoret team. ►

Ironically, now a faster, stronger and better runner, my energies flowed away from desiring a future as an athlete. The thought of uplifting the less fortunate people of Kenya, instead of furthering myself, became an obsession. Just like that, the goal to be a helper became a superior dream to pursue. My accidental sporting career, I came to understand, played as the flintstone to discover my destiny.

After returning to Sweden, Tanser writes up his running experiences in the book *Train Hard, Win Easy: The Kenyan Way*. He continues to travel and send running shoes to Kenya, but the emphasis shifts more towards the general population and less on elite athletes. After his publishers suggest he write a second edition of the book, he returns to Kenya to research it as 1999 draws to a close. After a fortnight's training in Ngong, he decides to see in the new millennium with a short break on the island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania.

It's 29 December. The day's plan: tourist meanderings in the morning, followed by a light lunch and concluding with a tempo run in the afternoon. Steering our rented motorbike, navigating traffic, I scouted for a park. Presently, I spied a field with people out exercising. Perfect. A quarter-mile amble along the beach, the urban noise dissolved as the roar of the waves drew me into a hidden paradise.

For the past 15 minutes, there hadn't been a soul in sight, yet, glancing ahead, I noticed two men moving briskly from the shade towards me. Surprisingly, the slighter man donned a jacket in the scalding weather. His companion bore a blazer slung over an arm. Although loath to break my momentum, I cantered to a jog before grinding to a halt.

Taking the initiative, I smiled, 'Hello. How may I help you?' Hearing nothing, I shifted to Swahili, 'Habari, unataka nini?' The next couple of seconds occurred in a lightning flash. Exposing a machete concealed under his jacket, the more slender of the two crooks sprang into action, targeting the centre of my skull with the iron blade. Instinctively, my right hand flew up to shield my face. The blade struck with force and easily carved through the flesh on my wrist, cutting to the bone. Meanwhile, the taller man, wielding a baseball bat masked by his jacket, swung as if attempting a home run. His club cracked against the side of my skull and I blacked out, collapsing to the sand.

I couldn't have been unconscious for long, but when I came to, my lips lay pressed against the sand. The two perpetrators, squatting behind me, struggled to untie the triple-knotted lace of one remaining shoe. Engrossed in their activities, the villains were oblivious to the fact I had roused. They chuckled, referring to me as 'dead meat'. Should I lay still, wait till they departed? But what if the man took another swing?

> **'I KNEW IF I WISHED TO SURVIVE, I MUST RUN TO SAVE MY LIFE'**

I knew I must fight to defend my life. Rapidly scrambling up, I caused Mr Machete to rise. Thrashing the blade, he again focused on my head, but this time I was alert. Eyeing the threatening metal, I frantically brandished my bloodied arm, foisting the limb like a sword. With the uninjured hand, I strived to snatch his wrist.

The lanky man must have clambered up, too – his bat smacked my back. I flinched, but the strikes were a minor distraction – I knew I needed to concentrate on seizing the machete. When the blade next thrust forwards, I threw my weight against the villain, knocking him sideways, and managed to grasp hold of his arm. Some frantic gripping and twisting caused him to drop the blade. Quickly, I grabbed the deadly weapon. The game had changed. Emboldened and lurching like a pirate, I yelled, 'Okay, fairer odds, huh?' Defeated, Mr Machete spat out words in English: 'Give me that shoe. That shoe is not doing you good.'

Fleetingly, I thought of the irony of donating footwear, yet here I stood, my life on the line, arguing over one solitary shoe. But that Nike symbolised the victory of this fight. 'The shoe is mine. Do you want to steal it? Walk forwards and try,' I responded, raising the blade, making all intentions clear.

Cursing loudly, the men began a retreat towards the palm trees. They carried my left shoe, a watch and a pair of plastic sunglasses. With the machete still raised high, I waited till they passed from sight before I relaxed my stance.

I assessed my injuries. Gore dripped like red treacle from my head and seeped out of the gash on my wrist. Splatters of blood dyed my singlet and shorts. A five-inch opening ran along the front of my hand to near the little finger, exposing bone. An acute, sickening ache pulsated through my brain. Nausea prompted my knees to buckle.

With a moment's rest, I reasoned, I might recover some strength. Drowsiness, with a magnetic force, pulled me down towards the beach. When my head reached within inches of the sand, a voice vaporised every thought. The words rang with urgency, 'Get up, Toby. Do not dare to lie down – your purpose is not complete.'

I have never undergone an out-of-body experience, yet the words sounded like someone else's voice. Quickly, I

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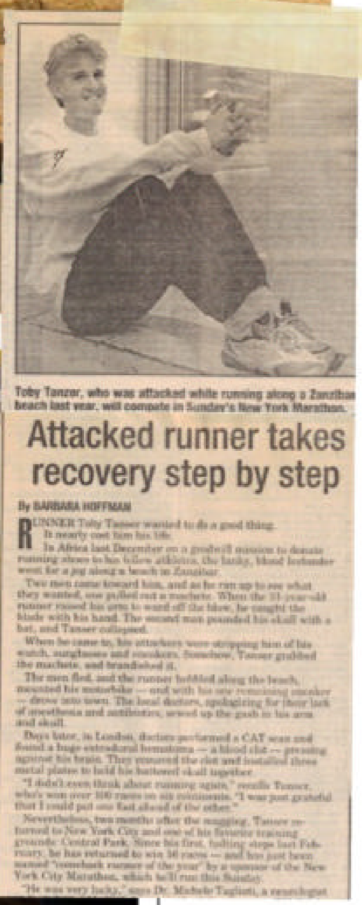

Toby Tanzer, who was attacked while running along a Zanziba
beach last year, will compete in Sunday's New York Marathon.

Attacked runner takes recovery step by step

By BARBARA HOFFMAN

Shoe4Africa
Women's
SHOE4AFRICA
1595

scrambled up. Who spoke, or did I talk to myself? Nevertheless, those words presented the bitter truth. Fear flooded my veins, crying for me to act – I desperately needed help.

I removed the stained singlet and fastened the material around my wrist above the gash, hoping to lessen the bleeding. I had no idea how to halt the globs of blood oozing from my skull. What to do? Should I walk the three miles back to the moped? But I might collapse if I didn't receive assistance soon. In a split second, I knew that if I wished to survive, I must run to save my life.

I set off on the toughest task I had ever undertaken, wading forwards through relentless and agonising hurt. Shuffling my feet, the notion of whispering yoga oms, with the mad hope of keeping my pulse at its minimum, came to mind. Never having practised yoga before, I had only read about this method, but I was willing to try any ploy.

I cannot run, but I can run. Om. I will not run, but I must run. Om. I cannot run, but please run. Om.

It was both the worst and, I later understood, the most significant run of my life.

Tanser rushes to the nearest medical clinic, where a doctor cleans and stitches his wounds. He spends a restless night there before returning to his hotel. The following day, after a further night of chronic headaches and shooting pains, he's advised to visit Gaurang Mehta, described by a friend as 'more than a doctor'. He administers antibiotics, cleanses the wounds and changes the dressings, then advises him to fly back to Sweden for urgent treatment straight away.

Before leaving the clinic, the doctor asked what our evening plans were. Hearing that we had nothing better in store than a meal back at the hotel, he insisted we spent New Year's Eve alongside him and his family.

Dr Mehta, a born narrator, amused our table with vibrant tales of Stone Town and his most famous neighbour, Freddie Mercury – raised 200 metres up the road. The family were faultless hosts, but by 10.30pm I flagged, desperate for solitude and sleep. Excusing myself under the guise of a bathroom visit, I shuffled to the staircase to retreat to the living quarters. Upon entering a darkened living room, I hid on the hard, wooden floor behind the sofa. As the pounding in my head intensified, I thought that if I could grab 40 winks, I might perk up before 12am. Whether I lived or died felt inconsequential; I longed to escape from this torture.

Twenty minutes later, Dr Mehta ventured down the stairs. He sauntered past me as if it were a routine occurrence to discover visitors hidden on his floor tucked behind the furniture. Coming to a stop at the far end of the room, he gazed at a portrait of an Indian god hanging on the wall.

'There is a meaning for this. Baba has delivered you to my care on your journey,' he said, with his eyes locked on the canvas. Gaining the strength to stand, I hobbled over to him. He clasped my shoulder and his warm eyes pierced mine. Sensing my scepticism, he said, 'You will learn why you came to Africa – there is a meaning, trust me. Baba knows.'

Crimson seeped through the white gauze wrapping over my wounds, the new millennium was on the cusp of dawning, and this Zanzibari doctor was quoting a riddle? The hacking, and my skull fracture, occurred for one reason, I maintained: those desirable Nike Pegasus running shoes. I merely ran in the wrong place at the wrong time.

At midnight, church bells chimed in cheerful chorus to inaugurate the once-in-a-thousand-year occasion. Flaming ►

Top: Nationwide violence erupted in Kenya in 2008 in the wake of the presidential election. **Middle:** A grandma is given shoes at a free Shoe4Africa event held to promote Aids awareness **Bottom:** As well as a children's hospital, Shoe4Africa raised funds to build four schools fireworks exploded, shooting rainbows of dissolving flares falling into the ink-black ocean.

Hours later, I ruminated upon Dr Mehta's words. How did he possess such an unshakeable belief, and how long would it be till I discovered its specific meaning?

Dr Mehta helps to arrange a flight to the UK and Tanser undergoes successful surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain on 8 January 2000 at Charing Cross Hospital in London. After recovering, he moves to New York City and starts competing in, and winning, local road races, becoming a familiar figure in the city's running community. He writes and lectures for New York Road Runners, and eventually takes a seat on the organisation's board of directors.

The shoe donations had dribbled along in a slipshod fashion, and although I slacked, the programme never stopped. Possessing little money, I posted individual pairs rather than larger cartons to Africa. Yet, in October 2001, I resumed lugging larger shipments to the post office and committed to sending a monthly minimum. Due to the beach assault, I labelled the project 'Shoe4Africa', referring to the single Nike Pegasus that aided my escape.

Luckily, each person I asked possessed items ready to donate, and I received trunkloads of footwear each week. Becoming overloaded with the product meant my postage costs skyrocketed, but a smellier quandary arose. The accumulation of shoes stunk out every corner of my apartment. To save the embarrassment of having to explain the sweaty stink, I stopped inviting people home. Could I have afforded storage costs? Maybe, but the more money I saved, the more shoes I could ship.

To further economise, I used a bicycle and looped Manhattan for shoe collections. For larger quantities, I dragged a suitcase on wheels. I must have been crazy, but it worked, and the method matched my budget – I had already shaved any living expense possible to support the rising shipping costs. Handwashing clothes, not owning a mobile phone and consuming little more than bagels, kale and rice reaped notable savings. By January 2006, the Shoe4Africa project transformed into a legal charity.

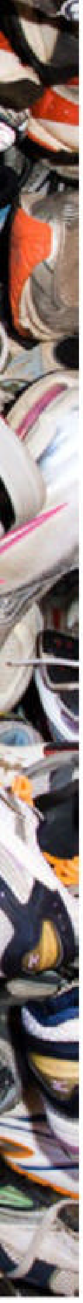
Above: Tanser filled his New York home with shoes to post to Kenya
Below: A Shoe4Africa event gives women a chance to race – and shoes to wear

Spending more time in Kenya to develop Shoe4Africa's programmes, including hosting a women's 5K to raise Aids awareness, Tanser experiences Kenya's violent clashes of early 2008 first-hand. Former President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the election, a result that was disputed by supporters of his opponent, Raila Odinga, causing an eruption of ethnic violence. Tanser narrowly avoids being attacked at a roadblock as the country enters a state of emergency. On New Year's Day 2008, he learns that more than 50 unarmed Kikuyu women and children have been murdered after being locked in a church and burned alive in Kiambaa village on the outskirts of Eldoret. After organising peace marches in Eldoret and Iten, Tanser visits the burned-out church. There, he meets Grace, a mother grieving for her three-year-old daughter Miriam, who died in the atrocity. He returns to Eldoret with a friend, numb with shock.

Driving back, neither Andrew nor I opened our mouths, as if we concealed a despicable secret. Only when we approached Eldoret town centre did I speak. I requested he drop me at the Grand Pri cafe, as strong coffee, the strongest, might prevent my head from swirling. Hopefully, the owner, Moses Tanui, was around – a man I met during that first run in Kenya 12 years ago.

Scratching words on a notepad, I composed a poem for Miriam, because what else could I do? Perhaps I should invest in a gravestone, but where would I place it? As the waitress handed me the cup, Pieter [Langerhorst] and his

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHOE4AFRICA; THILO THIELKE; MIKE KOBAL; GETTY IMAGES



Left, above: Tanser and guests at the laying of the hospital's foundation stone in August 2013 **Left, below:** East and central Africa's first public children's hospital opened in 2015, thanks in part to Tanser's fundraising efforts

wife Lornah [Kiplagat] entered the cafe. As Pieter approached, he tossed a blue laminated folder on the table and asked, 'Hey, Toby, do you want to do this?' It was scarcely a request, since before I could respond he began rambling about the car he had recently purchased. But the wording on the pamphlet diverted my concentration. I read the words aloud, 'A proposal to build east and central Africa's first public hospital for children'. I knew beyond doubt that this opportunity presented a calling for me.

Thumbing through the proposal, I began searching for loopholes. But turning the pages, each line of the preamble made me understand I had chosen correctly. How could it be, in sub-Saharan Africa's 46 countries, there stood just one public children's hospital? Poring over the websites of the World Health Organization, Unicef and Save the Children, I unearthed some mind-blowing statistics. How was it possible that one in eight sub-Saharan kids died before reaching the age of five, and two-thirds of those deaths proved to be either treatable or preventable? And, shockingly, 80% of children who died did so without ever seeing a healthcare provider.

> 'SATISFACTION, ENERGY AND RELIEF ALL ROLLED INTO ONE EMOTION'

The strains of Dr Mehta bellowed in my ear. Without any doubt, this must be the reason why I came to Africa. Instantly, I declared, 'I will build this project.'

Although I sprinted out of the blocks, after one hopeful month, the bank balance hovered at an uninspiring zero. Right away, a fairy-tale helter-skelter journey of jolts, furrows and fireworks began. I vowed to work every hour possible without compensation until we raised the funding to construct this hospital. Of course, we needed, at the very least, one member of full-time staff, but it should be a person without a salary – so let that person be me.

Desperate for any idea, I wrote a book entitled *More Fire: How To Run The Kenyan Way*. Where I found time to write, I don't remember. I pledged the entirety of my royalties to Shoe4Africa. One more drip in the barrel.

So how, as a New Yorker, did I beg for money? Frankly, I tried every trick. Not once was I demoralised by any rejection. The truth was, in every venture, I gained knowledge, even if I didn't collect a dime. Failure, for me, is in failing to try. I said yes to any lead or possibility that emerged that might lead to more money, remembering the Wayne Gretzky quote, 'You miss 100% of the shots you never take.'

Numerous ideas didn't pan out, often because I adamantly refused to spend a penny chancing to raise a dollar, or because people simply reneged on deals. But the diverse range of opportunities available in the city made up for the expense of residing in Manhattan.

October 2010 saw the Sea to the Stars idea [Tanser's plan to run from the coastal city of Mombasa to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro] come to fruition, raising over $100,000 in donations. Kind-hearted donors latched on to the fact that I threw my heart, legs and life into this cause.

Like magic, our bank balance mushroomed to $700,000, but I wouldn't contemplate placing a single brick until we approached at least a million dollars. Into 2011, we continued gathering funds, shooting beyond $1.3m, then a mind-blowing $1.5m. Satisfaction, energy and relief all rolled into one emotion. And, boom, just like that, we surpassed the construction funding goal.

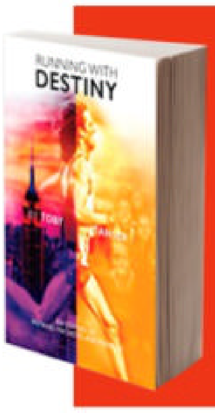
The day for laying the foundation stones in Eldoret was 21 August 2013. Around 40 of us gathered as I placed a plaque on one of the stones, 'Our dreams can come true if we live them'.

An enormous weight floated off my shoulders. Witnessing thousands of stones layered on top of each other all the way up to a roof would be a joy. I began imagining a glorious opening day in 24 months. Being on-site became my number-one priority.

The hospital grew, brick by brick, floor by floor. The highlight of 2014 was the roof going on the hospital, a tangible sign that the completion of the structure was close. Even suffering from wonky balance, I shimmied up on to the ridge to nail in the first section of sheeting.

Finally, on the glorious morning of 12 August 2015, among a crowd of people, we celebrated the opening of the first public children's hospital in east and central Africa. In the next couple of years, we would treat patients from as far as Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan and Burundi.

We did it – we created a healing community. There was a meaning to why I came to Africa. Dr Mehta, you were correct.



Adapted extract from *Running With Destiny* by Toby Tanser, available from Amazon (100% of royalties go to the Shoe4Africa Foundation). The Shoe4Africa Children's Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya, currently treats over 400 patients per day. The Shoe4Africa Juli Anne Perry Children's Cancer Hospital is currently under construction on the same site. For more information, visit shoe4africa.org

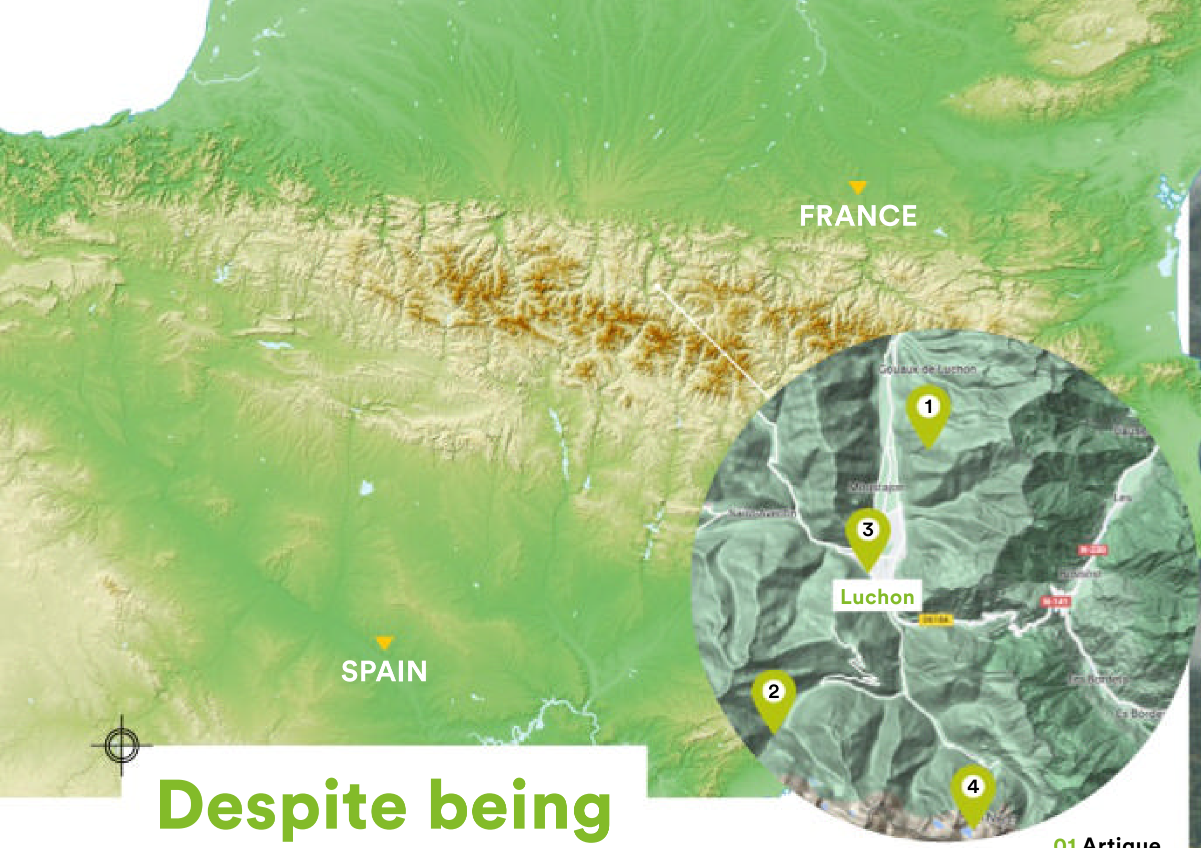
Tobias Mews and guide at the summit of the 2,738m Pic de Sauvegarde on the border of France and Spain

RUNNERS' PARADISE

QUEEN OF THE MOUNTAINS

A weekend among the stunning peaks of the Pyrenees is a ticket to trail running heaven

WORDS TOBIAS MEWS
PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES CARNEGIE ▶



01 Artigue

02 Cascade d'Enfer

03 Montée de La Crémaillère (VK)

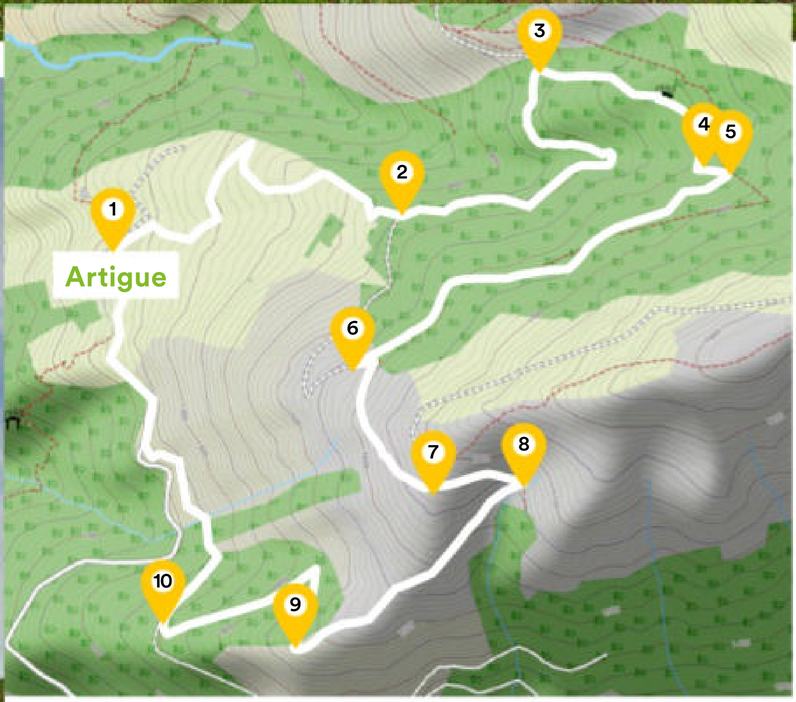
04 Port de Vénasque

01. Stunning views on the outskirts of Artigue
02. If you keep going, you'll reach Spain!

Despite being Europe's second-highest mountain range, the Pyrenees remain something of a mystery to many. I know this for a fact because before moving to the Pyrenees seven years ago, I couldn't have given you the name of not just the highest mountain in the range (Pic d'Aneto, by the way) but the name of any mountain.

Conversations with British friends have confirmed I'm far from alone in this, so here's a little bit of background: stretching 430km from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, and straddling the mountainous spine that divides France and Spain, the Pyrenean Massif is a place steeped in sporting history, brimming with the sort of adventure that lifelong memories are forged from. But it plays second fiddle to the Alps and therefore doesn't get the attention it deserves.

There are many wonderful areas for trail runners to explore in these mountains, but perhaps the jewel in the crown is the thermal spa town of Bagnères-de-Luchon, located in the department of Haute-Garonne. It's often described as the Chamonix of the Pyrenees, but that compliment actually does it something of disservice. It's



01

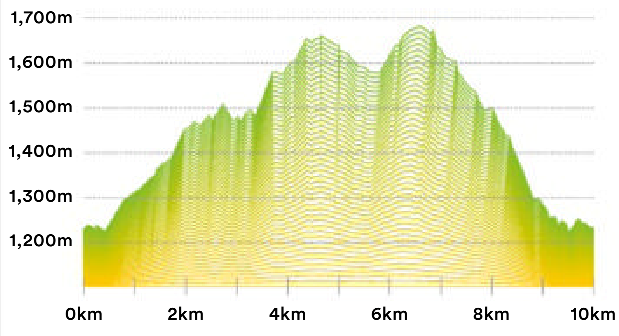
Artigue

Distance:
10km

Minimum elevation:
1,217m

Maximum elevation:
1,673m

Total climb:
595m



an authentic French mountain town that hasn't lost any of its charm to mass tourism. Like Chamonix, though, it's a gateway to the joys of the mountains.

Thanks to the choice of 3,000m peaks on its doorstep, Luchon (as locals call the town) is often referred to as the Queen of the Pyrenees, and has attracted adventurers since Roman times. A Mecca for skiers, hikers and mountaineers, it's also been a 'ville d'etape' in the Tour de France an impressive 55 times, so it's not uncommon to see the odd cyclist battling gravity on the vertiginous cols surrounding the town. But I've not come for any of that. I'm here for a weekend exploring the stunning routes that make this one of the most beautiful places in the world to don your trail shoes.

A VIEW TO A THRILL

AFTER ARRIVING IN LUCHON in the darkness of Friday evening, we awake to see candy-floss clouds floating in and out of the valley's wooded nooks and crannies, and start the day with a gentle leg-stretch along the pretty tree-lined street. We then loop around the Lac du Badech, a long and thin body of water to the north of the town. Feeling suitably warmed up, we jump in the car and head up the winding road to Artigue.

Tobias Mews is an adventure athlete, ultramarathoner, journalist and author of *50 Races To Run Before You Die*. He has been throwing himself up and down mountains and across deserts and jungles for over 20 years – and he tells the stories of his adventures in the hope that they will inspire others to get out there, too.

Just shy of 10km from Luchon and perched on the edge of the mountain at 1,250m, the village of Artigue appears untouched by the modern world. With a mere 32 inhabitants, swelling to 60 during the summer season, it's not exactly a bustling metropolis, but it oozes charm and character, and offers stunning views of the Luchon valley in all its splendour, and the 3,000m peaks that lie beyond.

There's a myriad of tracks to choose from, but the simplest – and the one we choose to follow – is the GR10, which runs right up to the border with Spain. Guided by the GR signage – small red and white markers painted on to lamp posts, trees and stones – it's pretty difficult to get lost. Our target is the Cabane de Saunères, a small stone hut that serves both as a refuge from nasty weather for hikers and also – for us – the perfect spot for a mid-run picnic while gazing at the valley below. It is truly magnificent.

Scores of vultures glide above, seemingly oblivious to us and more interested in searching for food. Drinking in the stunning mountain panorama, we head up to the Fontaine de Saunères and find the path that will take us back down the mountain towards the Grange de Caubet and ultimately back to our starting point.

Refreshed and reinvigorated after our 10K run, we feel we've earned a trip to Balnéa, the thermal spa in the neighbouring Loudenvielle. Relaxing in the outdoor Japanese bath, enjoying the muscle-soothing 38°C water as paragliders floated above… the word bliss doesn't do it justice. ►

02

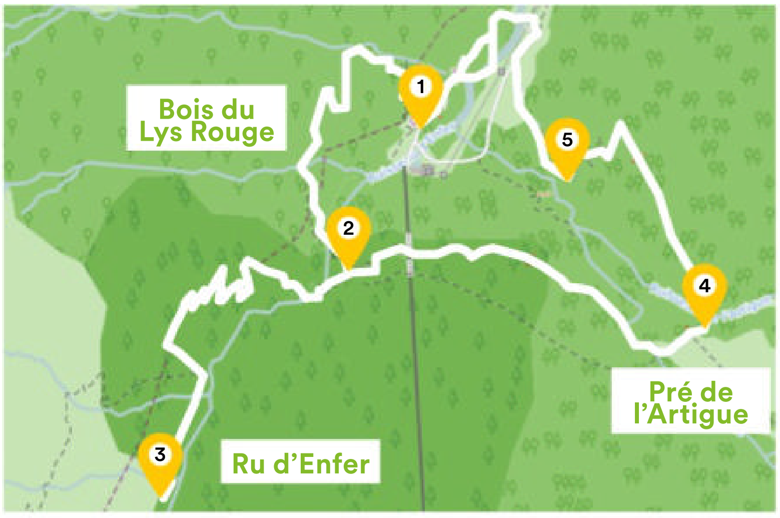
Cascade d'Enfer

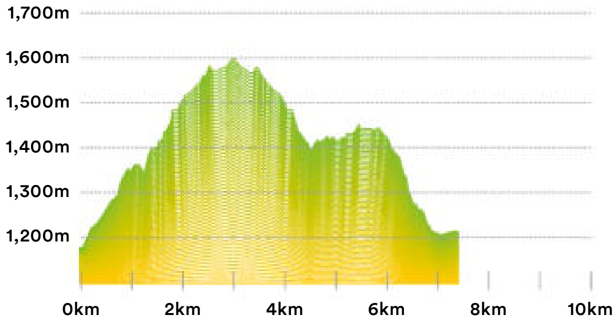
Distance: 7.5km

Minimum elevation: 1,122m

Maximum elevation: 1,600m

Total climb: 582m





TAKING THE FALL

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, we head to the Lys Valley. After a 15-minute drive from Luchon, we park and take a moment to soak in the 70m Cascade d'Enfer, clearly visible as it pours out of the mountain, like a scene from the movie *Avatar*.

The Lys Valley is the start point for a number of runs and hikes, many of which head into the mountains towards some stunning lakes and the nearby Refuge du Maupas. But those epic trails will have to wait for another day, as we have a pleasant 7.5km loop packed with scenic punch in our sights.

There's no official direction to follow on this route (many choose to head left to the Pré de l'Artigue before coming around), but we choose to stay right and head directly up the steepest side towards the main event – the Gouffre d'Enfer.

Local mountain guide Olivier Dejean leads us up the path to the right of the small hydroelectric power plant and we run-walk our way up the steep but well-trodden single track, stepping over tree roots with care. Out of the main summer season, with the warm sun casting a magical light through the foliage of the trees, we have the trails almost to ourselves.

You hear the waterfall before you see it – a reminder to deviate off the trail and trot down some stone steps carved into the hillside. A small viewing platform allows us to fully take in this natural wonder as it plummets into a gorge below. The air feels decidedly cooler, as the waterfall is fed by melted ice from the glacier 3,000m above at the Cirque des Crabioules.

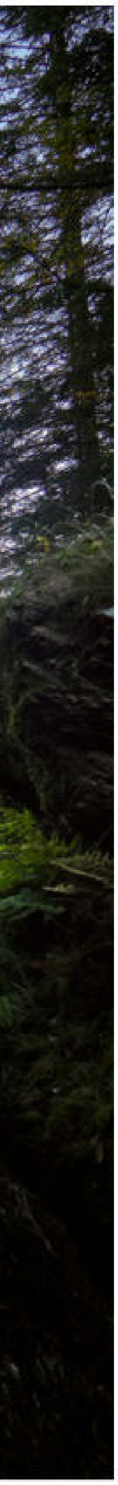
We continue towards the Ru d'Enfer. The single-track woodland trail morphs into a stony path with 200m of climb until we arrive at a tall, narrow gap in the mountain. It looks like a giant has sliced a sword down the middle, but it's the work of the same river that feeds the Gouffre below.

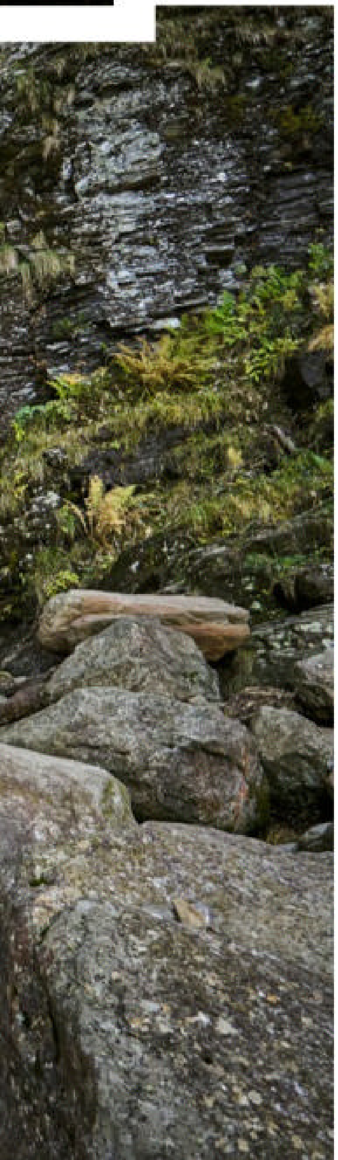
'Make a wish,' says Olivier. 'It will bring you good luck.' I'm already feeling as though I've had my fair share of good fortune, but ask for a little more before we reluctantly make our way back down the mountainside, zig-zagging down the path with childlike enthusiasm as we pass hikers plodding up the mountain to make their own wishes. Back at the starting point, we hungrily eye the cafe, Ô Berges du Lys, which sits at the entrance of the car park. We'll need plenty of sustenance for this afternoon's activity.

01. Around 2km in, you'll find the impressive Gouffre d'Enfer
02. At 1,550m, the Ru d'Enfer is the route's highest point

01

02





03. Glimpses of Luchon early in the VK
04. Reaching the 1,808m summit at Superbagnères – the Queen of the Pyrenees in all its glory

THE ONLY WAY IS UP

AS YOU WALK ALONG THE streets of Luchon, flanked by the beautiful period houses that hint at a bygone era, it's impossible not to look up at the Grand Hotel of Superbagnères some 1,000m above. This enormous edifice, now empty and awaiting renovation, once hosted early 20th-century skiers and hikers, who would take the train up to the oldest ski resort in the Pyrenees via a rack railway known as La Crémaillère.

The train is no longer in use, replaced by the telecabin in operation today. But rather than surrender to the weeds, the track found a new purpose in the late 80s in the guise of the Montée de La Crémaillère. For over 30 years, runners would flock to Luchon to run up this historic 'vertical kilometre', long before the term came into popular parlance. And thanks to its inclusion in the mountain running champs – the renowned Coupe de France – it acquired legendary status.

The start of the trail is on the edge of the town, just 40m from the telecabin station. A glance on Strava will tell you that the 'KOM' record time for this segment is a mind-boggling 48:57, but assuming you don't plan to better a record that has stood since 2016, don't go off too quickly. The average gradient is 21%, so you'll quickly realise that unless your name is Kilian Jornet, the chances of actually running up the entire 5.8km track are minimal. But then sometimes you simply need to put your head down and go for it.

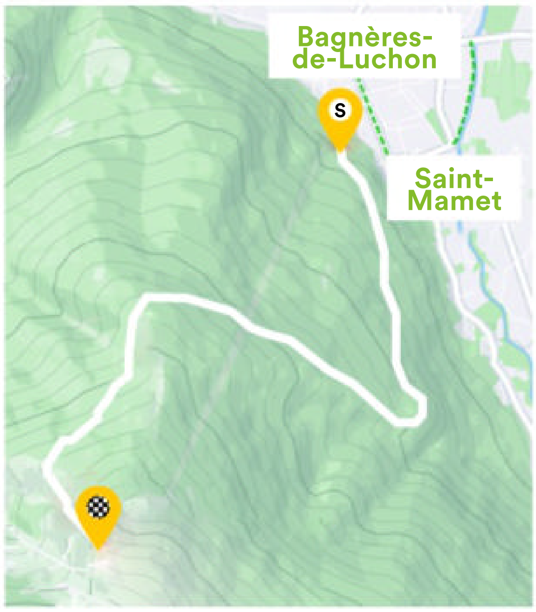
Unsurprisingly, the former train route has very few turns, and while most of the climb is in the woods, every once in a while, the foliage parts like a stage curtain to offer glimpses of Luchon below. Then, at around 1,650m altitude and about 800m shy of the finish, I finally exit the tree line. Scattered around are reminders of the winter ski season and the imposing Grand Hotel looms above.

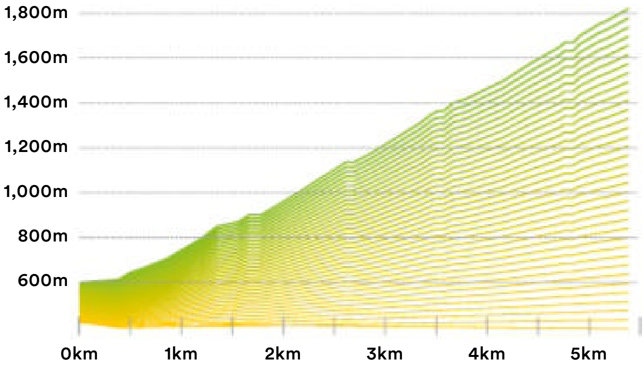
Those last 800m are beautiful but boy are they tough, with the altitude thinning the air and the accumulated fatigue of scrambling up a ridiculously steep mountain sapping the body. Turning the final corner to arrive in front of the Grand Hotel makes all the hard work worthwhile, though, with a panoramic view of 3,000m peaks to take any remaining breath away. (And the welcome sight of the telecabin offering a more forgiving way back down.) ►

03

Montée de La Crémaillère

Distance: 5.8km
Minimum elevation: 600m
Maximum elevation: 1,808m
Total climb: 1,200m





SUMMIT SUNRISE

THE TRAIL THAT WINDS ITS WAY UP from Luchon to the Port de Vénasque, a narrow cleft of rock marking the border between France and Spain, is what the French refer to as an 'incontournable' – a must-do. And as the departure point for an ascent on the Pic d'Aneto – the highest peak in the Pyrenees – mentioning it to a local will have them nodding with excitement and new-found respect.

The trailhead at the Hospice de France is an easy 18-minute drive from Luchon, although you may be tempted to run along the well-signed trail as they do in the Luchon Aneto Trail race.

Having arrived in the early hours with the aim of catching the sunrise, we switch on our headlamps and set off at a gentle pace with our guide Olivier – who's also president and founder of the Luchon Aneto Trail – telling us about the race and the history of this route. From the Romans to Napoleon's army through to resistance fighters and allied pilots escaping Nazi-occupied France during the Second World War, the Port de Vénasque is steeped in over two millennia of history. It's fair to say it's a rite of passage.

The route isn't particularly technical or difficult to follow, but it is steep. The gradient slows us down enough to truly take in the majestic scenery as we make our way to the Refuge de Vénasque, three-quarters of the way up the route. It's temporarily closed for renovation, but I make a mental note that it would be the perfect place to stay on a future trip.

From the Refuge, it takes another 15 minutes to reach the famous col. As promised, the view of the sun rising above the Pic d'Aneto is something to treasure. And you truly feel on the edge of two worlds as you gaze at Spain on one side and France on the other.

We could follow the circular route of the Luchon Aneto Trail race, which dips down into Spain and heads east before retracing the border along the Crête de Crabidès and back to the Hospice. Instead, we choose to climb the Pic de Sauvegarde, which flanks the Port. The route isn't too hardcore and, on reaching the 2,738m summit, we're rewarded with a 360-degree view of the Pyrenees. At 9am, with not another soul in sight, we feel as though we're standing on top of the world.

With a flight home awaiting us later that afternoon, James – who has been taking the pictures – and I sadly can't linger for too long before heading down the mountain. But we're both so bowled over by this beautiful part of the Pyrenees that we make a pact to return for the Luchon Aneto Trail race in July 2023. Hopefully we'll see you there!

01

④

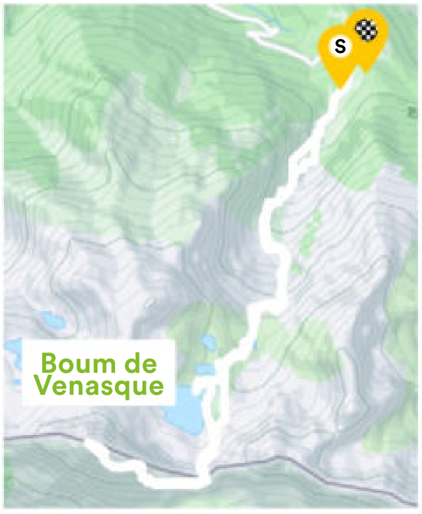
Port de Vénasque

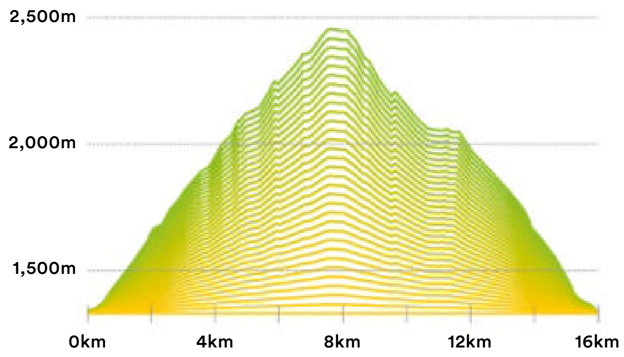
Distance: 16km

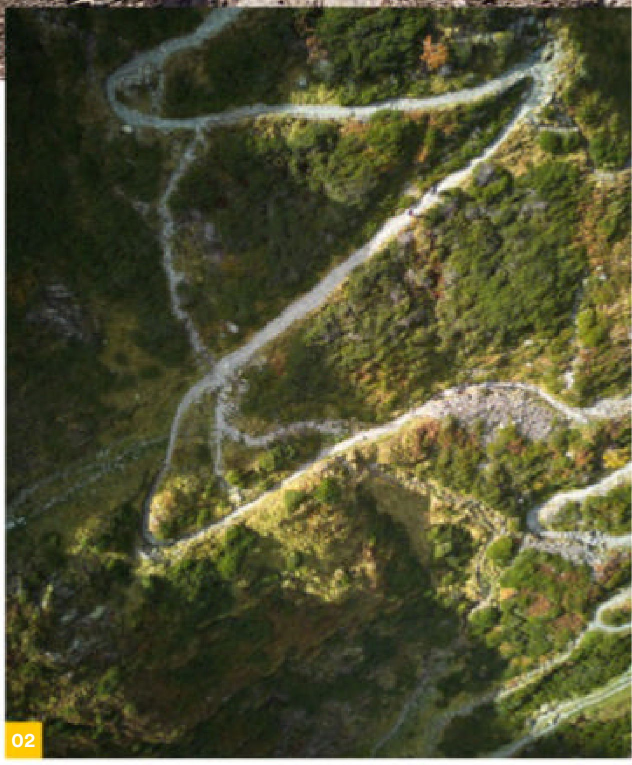
Minimum elevation: 1,355m

Maximum elevation: 2,738m

Total climb: 1,400m



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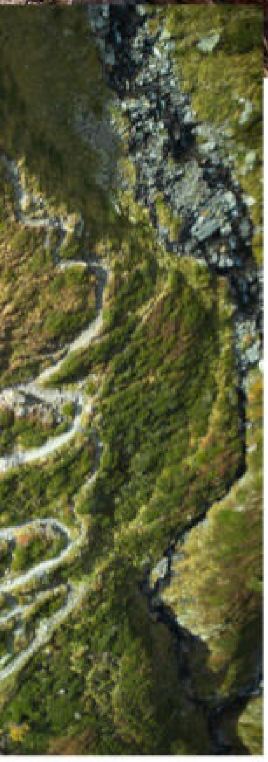


01. It's all downhill from the 2,738m Pic de Sauvegarde
02. The first 5km zigzags as you climb to the Refuge de Vénasque
03. After 1,400m of ascent in 7.5km, we reach the rocky Pic de Sauvegarde

Sweating the details

HOW TO GET THERE

Fly (or take the Eurostar, then TGV train) to Toulouse. It's a 90-minute drive to Luchon, or if you want to lower your CO_2 footprint, take the train from Toulouse centre to Bagnères-de-Luchon and enjoy two hours of Pyrenean scenery on the way.

WHEN TO GO

June to October is the best period to run in the Luchon valley. Snow cover can sometimes linger into June at higher elevations, though, so it's worth checking with the Office de la Montagne in Luchon (office-montagne.org).

WHERE TO STAY

There are dozens of hotels, gites and chambres d'hôtes to choose from. We stayed in the four-star hotel Le Castel d'Alti, a large and beautifully restored 18th-century home situated on the main drag of Luchon – Les Allées d'Étigny. Visit pyrenees31.com for further information.

To stay at the Refuge de Vénasque, you'll need to visit refugedevenasque.ffcam.fr. Book well in advance as it's very popular.

GETTING AROUND

Although there are plenty of possibilities for running from the centre of Luchon, thanks in part to the telecabin taking you up to Superbagnères ski station, hiring a car gives you a lot more options, including some of the runs detailed in this piece.

FUEL AND REFUEL

There's no shortage of great places to eat and drink in and around Luchon. The mountain cuisine is a well-earned treat, and you should definitely sample the locally brewed Benasque beer.

RACES

The prime race in the Luchon valley is the Luchon Aneto Trail (next held 7-9 July 2023). There are a plethora of distances to choose from, including 10K, 21K, 42K, 2×40K, 65K and, the biggest of them all, 85K. With more than 3,000 entrants across the races, it's got an amazing atmosphere.

GETTING ORGANISED

Adventure Creators (adventurecreators.com) offers week-long trail running tours for groups of four or more between June and October. Tobias Mews also offers tours from his Secret Pyrenees retreat (secretpyrenees.com).

RUNNER'S WORLD

PROTEIN 2.0

WORDS **COURTNEY RUBIN**

PHOTOGRAPHY **ALEX LAU**

RUNNER'S WORLD PROTEIN PRIMER

In the endless debate over the best eating regime for achieving your health and fitness goals, the latest thinking is once again highlighting the importance of one macronutrient – and how we get it into our bodies. **Is it time to rethink your protein?**

►

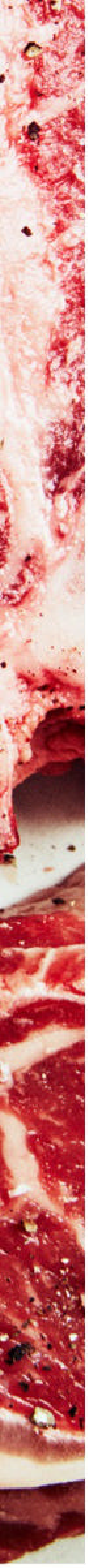
Meat may come rightly with a side serving of moral and ethical debate around animal rights and the sustainable future of the planet, but in terms of how it affects your body – and particularly its role in providing a vital macronutrient – it has been undergoing something of a rehabilitation in scientific circles. Now, after at least two decades of being nudged towards everything plant-based – with even hamburger heavyweight McDonald's rolling out a McPlant menu – a small but growing chorus of researchers and public health experts are pushing back.

Let's be clear: it's not that they're saying you must eat meat; more that they're highlighting how difficult it can be to get all the protein you need without including any animal products in your diet. 'Not everyone can sustain a healthy weight, meet protein and other nutrient needs [such as iron] and stay on a vegan diet,' explains Sareen Gropper, a professor of nutrition at Florida Atlantic University, US, who generally recommends the Mediterranean diet (which mostly consists of plant-based foods with plenty of whole grains, beans and nuts, plus some lean poultry, fish and dairy). While Professor Gropper also notes that 'many people on vegan diets are healthy and meeting all their nutrient needs', she adds that there is an increased risk of suffering from general fatigue due to protein or iron deficiencies.

Can you get the protein you need without meat?

Of course, it's important to clarify that while plants do many wonderful things for your health and the planet, and there are many people – including some elite runners – who thrive on plant-based diets, they're not a source of high-quality protein, a macronutrient many people still aren't getting enough of. Or at least, they're not getting the right kinds at the right times. Humans need amino acids, the building blocks of protein, for many reasons; they mount a response to infections and support just about every structure in the body – bone, liver, gut, tissues, hair, nails, skin and, yes, the one that probably comes to mind first for runners concerned about recovering and adapting from training: muscle. But people tend only to think of muscle in terms of their strength, power and fitness – and as important as that may be, that's a mistake, says Gabrielle Lyon, founder of the medical practice and education centre Muscle-Centric Medicine.

Okay, time to delve a little deeper into the science. Over the past 20 years, researchers have come to understand



Amino acids support every structure in the body

that skeletal muscles are endocrine organs, just like the thyroid. During muscle contraction, endocrine organs produce and secrete hundreds of small proteins called myokines, which can keep inflammation from getting out of hand. This is also why being 'under-muscled' is fast becoming not simply a limit on running performance, but a general health issue you should watch out for. This isn't just about how much (or how little) you can deadlift in the gym or how much power you can call on to push up your hill sprints; patients with less muscle mass have more complications, longer hospital stays and lower survival rates, according to a review of nearly 150 studies published in *Annals Of Medicine*.

Plus, ageing bodies process protein less efficiently and need more of it in order to help maintain muscle mass and strength, bone health and other vital functions. Start thinking of muscle as a healthy ageing strategy, suggests Dr Lyon. One way to do that is to focus on getting enough high-quality protein, she says, which will help offer protection from many chronic diseases.

The acid house

WHILE THE GENERAL RECOMMENDED daily intake for protein remains a modest 0.8g per kilogram of body weight, researchers are now saying we need something more like 1.2g to 1.5g per kilogram to support tissue growth. For most of us, this amounts to about 30g to 40g per meal – and that 'per meal' is intentional; you really do need to eat it all day. 'The body doesn't store amino acids,' says Carol Johnston, a professor of nutrition at Arizona State University in the US. That means it's best to have them available at any time, so it's essential to spread your protein intake throughout the day (and make sure to have some with breakfast, too). You might think that seems easy enough to do these days, with protein increasingly being added to everything from cereal to biscuits and beer. But then, not all protein is created equal.

Protein is made up of 20 amino acids, 11 that our bodies make, and nine, called essential amino acids, that we can get only from food. In addition to being the foundation of protein, the nine essential aminos are also signalling molecules. Basically, when you eat them, particularly one called leucine, they start stimulating protein synthesis in the body. All animal products contain the essential aminos, while many plant proteins are missing at least one (though some are complete proteins, such as quinoa, soya, chickpeas, pistachios, buckwheat, amaranth, hemp seeds and spirulina). And what makes things trickier is that if you don't eat all nine aminos, nothing happens.

'You can have, for example, leucine to stimulate the process,' says Luc van Loon, professor of physiology of exercise and nutrition at Maastricht University Medical Centre in the Netherlands. 'But you also need the bricks to build the house. You can have all the construction workers present, but if they don't have the bricks, the house is not going to get built,' he adds. (And if you don't begin building the house now, you'll find it much more difficult to start from scratch later: your twenties, thirties and even your forties are your prime muscle-building years, when you have hormones on your side.)

By the way, these properties (known as 'anabolic') of amino acids make it critical to keep protein levels up even if you're injured or not able to exercise, which is the other way (besides eating) that your body is stimulated to build muscle. Take away activity and you're already losing some. Then if you decide to reduce calories because you're not moving as much, you'll lose even more muscle, Professor van Loon says, because in doing so, you'll probably also reduce your protein intake. Instead, you need to eat more protein-dense foods or supplements to help address the imbalance.

And although carbs give you fuel needed for a high-intensity exercise, protein has the staying power. Training makes your body more sensitive to the anabolic properties of amino acids, meaning it will use more of the protein for synthesis. (This effect lasts for no longer than 48 hours after a workout.) 'You are what you eat, or what you just ate, but if you're physically active, you're actually more of ►

Don't skip the cheese board – it's packed with protein

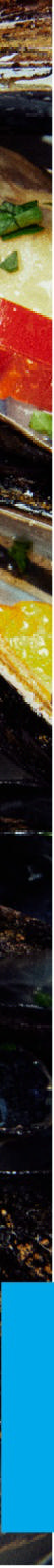
FOOD STYLING: OLIVIA MACK MCCOOL

Throw mussels in the pan for a quick protein hit

The body doesn't treat all proteins the same

Is whey the way?

Why is whey in every protein powder and energy bar? Because when it's isolated – it makes up 20% of cow's milk protein – whey wins the Most Likely To Stimulate Muscle Protein Synthesis award. That's because whey is rapidly digested and absorbed, plus it has a relatively high amount of leucine. But do you need it? No. 'The difference we see with consuming protein via whey or via milk is minimal,' says Professor van Loon. If you're an elite athlete who needs every edge, adding whey may matter. But for the rest of us, we can get our protein from a balanced diet.



what you just ate,' adds Professor van Loon. Plus, protein slows down carb absorption, preventing blood sugar spikes and crashes, and it's used to repair tissue, which is how your muscle recovers, allowing you to bounce back and smash out your sessions week after week.

Fibre optics

THE NEXT HURDLE WHEN it comes to the protein equality issue is that the body doesn't treat all proteins the same, which means the number of grams you see on a label or nutrition chart doesn't tell the whole story. To paint the full picture, around 85% of the protein in egg whites, whole eggs and chicken is absorbed by the body, compared with 63%, 72% and 75% respectively of the protein in mung beans, yellow peas and chickpeas, according to studies published in the *American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition*. The lower bioavailability of plant protein is due to the presence of fibre or tannins – which are called 'anti-nutritional factors'. (Tannins are antioxidants; fibre is the fuel for the gut microbiome, which affects everything from your mood to metabolism.)

So, while you can mix your plant proteins to make sure you're getting all nine aminos with a varied diet, the volume of food you'll need to eat can be… a lot. 'For example, 110g of skinless chicken breast provides about 31g of protein and 155 calories,' says Professor Gropper. 'To get the same amount of protein, one would need to consume 380g of legumes, 315g of rice and 75g of vegetables, but the calorie count is closer to 700,' she adds.

But plant protein is hands down better for a longer lifespan, right? Well, that thinking is shifting, too. Take the case of cholesterol – once the reason we were told to limit eggs and shellfish. Guidelines that suggested limiting their intake were dropped when experts found these foods didn't actually increase the risk of heart disease, after all. If you need another reason to embrace eggs, they're considered the gold standard of protein quality because they contain all nine essential amino acids and almost every vitamin and mineral your body requires.

Saturated fat has also been rehabilitated – at least, the kind found in whole foods, such as lean beef or full-fat Greek yoghurt. The recommendation to limit it to no more than 10% of total calories 'is not supported by rigorous scientific studies', concluded a study published in the journal *Nutrients*. Other research suggests that it's more important to consider the overall nutritional profile of a food than any one macro (or micro) nutrient.

'When it comes to cancer, while there's no data showing strict veganism is better for outcomes, there is a strong association between whole-food, plant-based diets and lower incidences of several cancers, such as breast, ovarian and colon cancer, says Neil Iyengar, an oncologist specialising in breast cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, US, who has studied the effect of diets on the disease. He recommends aiming for 20g to 30g of fibre per day, plus a diet in which fat is less than 35% of total calorie consumption. (But if you're vegan for ethical reasons, all of this may be moot.)

45%

Percentage of people who said they knew how much protein they'd consumed in the past 24 hours. What about you?

Source: FMCG Gurus survey

Plant-based and striving

TO BE CLEAR, hitting your protein needs with a plant-based diet can be done, but you'll have to plan carefully if you don't want to regularly consume 'an astronomical amount of carbohydrates', says Dr Lyon. 'Most people are not training hard enough, nor can their physiology handle, a high-carb diet in order to get the protein.' While that's one expert's take, processed soya products, such as sausages, along with high-quality vegan protein sources such as mycoprotein (eg, Quorn) and seitan, can often be high in salt and fat.

One solution might be plant protein isolates and concentrates, in which the fibre is removed, so you absorb them better. But if you're vegan for sustainability reasons, consider that processed plant foods cost energy and produce carbon dioxide, too. What's more, we don't know exactly what's in some of the plant proteins we're consuming in large amounts, or their long-term implications. What we do know is that we've been eating animal proteins (and whole plants) for 300,000 years and studying the effects on our bodies for decades. And we know that protein is essential for optimising the quality of life – and for prolonging it, says Dr Lyon. 'The more muscle mass you have, the better your survivability.'

Professor Johnston, who's been studying nutrition for more than 40 years, recently made changes to her own diet to take full advantage of the benefits of protein. 'Even though I'm a nutritionist, I didn't eat much breakfast, but now I make a point of getting protein in the early morning.' (Her picks are cheese and eggs – she's a lacto-ovo vegetarian, meaning she can eat both – and she recommends yoghurt to people with limited time or an inability to face breakfast.) 'Of course you want to be strong, but there are so many proteins your body makes [via the essential amino acids coming from food], so having the ability to create them all day is critical,' she says. And that is certainly food for thought. ■

The kidneys are alright

THE BELIEF THAT HIGH-protein diets can cause kidney problems in healthy adults is being re-examined by some experts. Processing large amounts of protein does not lead to a decline in kidney function, found a *Journal Of Nutrition* review of more than 20 studies involving hundreds of participants. 'This thought came from the fact that people with kidney failure or reduced kidney function are generally put on a low-protein diet in order not to overburden the kidneys,' says Professor van Loon. 'But it's not the other way around. There's no evidence whatsoever.'

Dales High Way
Dales High Way 2022
90/104 Miles

Ryk's fastest marathon time is 4:51 – and he has no plans to top it

Last, bu

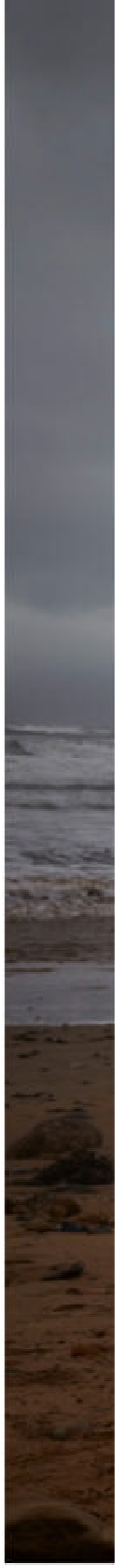
WORDS: LILY CANTER

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIAN BENJAMIN

t not least

The biggest rewards running offers are often found a long way from the podium, **as these proud back-of-the-packers know well**

►



The world of recreational running can all too quickly slide from a stress-relieving activity to competitive pursuit. From chasing PBs to getting top spot on a Strava segment, we all want to go faster and rank higher in races. But for many runners, the physical and mental rewards from lacing up have nothing to do with gunning for the front of the pack. And for some, that even goes to the extreme of coming in last. However, as the stories here show, those trailing at the very back of the pack can be the biggest winners.

Punk Panther
Dales High Way
Dales High Way 2022
90/104 Miles

People at the back push themselves just as hard, says Ryk

'Sometimes I'm last, but so what? I've had a great day out'

Ryk Downes, 58, has faced death – and came back to finish some truly epic races

'When I was a teenager, I used to love orienteering. I was good at navigation, so I would always do quite well. When I got married and had a family, I stopped running. The catalyst to restart came in 2002: I went to a barbecue and thought I'd run home to get something I'd forgotten – I couldn't even run to the end of the street. I was 39; nearly 18st. So I decided I was going to run the next London Marathon for charity. And I did.

I struggled with cramp halfway through, but at the end, I felt fresh. So my neighbour suggested I try something longer. I ran 84 miles along Hadrian's Wall, raising £3,500 for charity – and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I love being outdoors and listening to nature. The number of amazing animals – deer, badgers, red squirrels – I've seen just by paying attention is great. You don't have to run at a great speed to see that. A long-standing knee injury means I can't run overly fast anyway. My quickest marathon is 4:51.

Then, one day in 2016, I was out running – I was doing the Ron Hill #RunEveryDay challenge and was on day 111, running 10K every day – and on that particular day, just as I was coming back into our village near Otley, Yorkshire, I had a cardiac arrest and died for 20 minutes. They restarted my heart three times and again in the air ambulance.

It was an undiagnosed genetic problem, and running saved my life. If I hadn't been so fit they wouldn't have been able to bring me round. As a consequence, I had a triple heart bypass and the consultant made me promise that I'd get back to ultras, rather than sit around watching daytime TV and feeling sorry for myself. So, 12 weeks later, I did the Leeds Half with a defibrillator on my back, and I did a 60-mile ultra that year, too.

I'm on beta blockers now, which makes running at peak performance not advisable. I don't enjoy pushing myself to the limit anyway. I'd rather jog along at whatever pace I want. I look at an event, and how long you're allowed, and think, as long as I finish in time, that's fine. Sometimes, I'm last, but so what? I've had a great day out. And because I've taken my time, I can carry on the next day. The longest run I've done is the Montane Spine Race, which is 268 miles. I was the last male, but I finished it and had a fantastic journey. In fact, last place was so coveted, a woman hung back to get the last-place prize, even though she was quicker than me.

But it's not all about ultras. In 2021, I helped set up a local parkrun and managed to get them funding. I do it most Saturday mornings. I'm not the world's fastest runner but I love running any distance. It has also steered me to a new career. When I had my heart attack, I was training to be a teacher, but the doctor said it might be too stressful. I thought about what I loved and started Punk Panther Endurance Events in 2016.

We organise events and award people who have run 1,000 miles with us, rather than just focusing on the winners. A visually impaired runner completed one of our ultras because we have a very generous time limit. There's a handicap race once a year so people aren't on their own at the back. People at the back push themselves just as hard and are just as determined to finish the race as the competitive runners up front.'
punkpanther.co.uk

Last October, Leigh ran her first trail half in 3:03:47

'I was never interested in winning races'

Running has always been about health for **Leigh Trimble, 52,** but even more so since she was diagnosed with a lung condition

'Seven years ago, I went for a health check and was told I needed to do something about my high blood pressure. The nurse, who was a runner, recommended I take up running to get fit and relieve stress.

I didn't want to go on medication, so I took her advice. I went out with a stopwatch and did a one-minute run, one-minute walk, and I built it up slowly. I got out as much as I could and started to feel the benefits to my physical and mental health, as I'd struggled for years with anxiety and depression. A month later, I went back for a check-up and my blood pressure was lower – that was all I needed to know to keep going. At that point, my aim was to be able to run for 30 minutes.

About a year later, I was diagnosed with late-onset asthma, but I was able to manage it with an inhaler. I joined a running group and enjoyed going out with other people. I was never interested in winning races.

Although I was able to run without stopping in Cleveland Hills, North Yorkshire, where I live, I was finding it difficult to climb the stairs. I had my annual breathing test and was told I had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Thankfully, like the asthma, it can be controlled and is mild. It's going to get worse as I get older, so the diagnosis could have sent me one of two ways. I know people who have given up and said they can't do anything, but I'm determined to stave it off as long as possible.

Running has changed my life. I now work with Red Balloons, a charity I used to volunteer with, which combines mental wellbeing support with physical activity. And I was chuffed to bits with myself when I did my first half marathon. Unless everyone in front of me falls over or collapses, I'm never going to be at the front; I'll always be three quarters of the way down the field. But it was amazing to achieve it – and the confidence boost I got… I can't describe it.

I've decided that I want to do a trail ultra in 2024. I've seen what I can do when I put my mind to it. It's not about how fast I'm going, but I do use stats now to see how much stronger I'm getting. It tells me I'm on the right track to get to the start line of that ultra.

I want to push myself and I'm passionate about the fact that even if you've got physical health problems, it shouldn't hold you back. You might be limited to what you can do and what you can achieve but you can still push those limits in other ways.

That's not to say I haven't had doubts. I've stood there on the start line looking round thinking, "What the hell am I doing here? I'm a daft middle-aged woman with dodgy lungs, surrounded by all these young people looking really fit." And yet, I still get through it. It's about having faith in yourself.'

Find Leigh on Instagram @overthehill2022; redballoons.org.uk

►

After doing Couch to 5K in 2020, Sharron's first 5K took her 40:29

'Running became a whole new adventure'

Exploring with her two dogs is motivation enough for **Sharron Hunko, 54,** who has found running joy in the canicross community

'When I was in school, I used to cheat in the cross-country. They'd send us into the woods, and I'd cut up a side street and wait until everyone was back to walk in at the end. Getting sweaty was *not* going to happen. I can't believe I run now; I do way more than I ever did when I was younger.

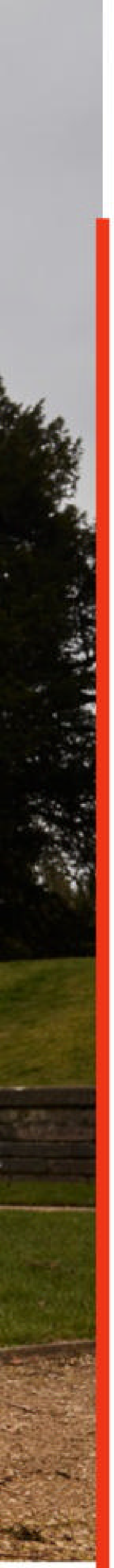
After school, I started putting weight on, reaching 16st over the years. Then, for some reason, in 2014, I decided to do a Wolf Run [an obstacle course race] with friends. I had no idea about time. After that, I began running a bit more and did the Great North Run in 2015 and some triathlons with Market Bosworth tri club. They were lovely; they would all stay to cheer me on, as I would be the last one to cross the line.

But then during Covid, I didn't do much training, and I lost both of my horses, so my whole world changed. I felt like I'd lost everything. We decided to get a dog in the first lockdown – Lilly, a lurcher – and we got Rusty, a segugio italiano in the second lockdown. It became my reason to go out running and not be on my own. I started doing canicross, a sport where you run cross-country tied to a dog. I could suddenly go to the woods, which I wouldn't do on my own, and running became a whole new adventure. I've now signed up for an ultra Cani-Trail race in Wales.

I did join a local running club, and there were fast runners and slow runners, but the latter often didn't turn up, so I would be on my own. I prefer going out with the dogs because then I'm not alone. We've done 10K and 5K races and everyone is really encouraging and friendly – no one looks down on you because of your times and even the quick runners are supportive. And because there's a staggered start, you don't even know your position until the results are published.

I tend to run with the dogs twice a week – once in the harness and once without it – and I do run by myself as well because I need to carry myself more. I get a poor time if I'm finishing on my own, but I'll probably have to race alone in the summer when I can't run with the dogs because it'll be too hot for them.

The dogs are my motivation because I'll never be a fast runner. Getting out the door and knowing they are mini-athletes, too, that they've got to go out and get their exercise as well, makes me want to go out.'



‘Although you’re last, you’ve still finished’

Coming last in a 100-mile race was a career highlight for **Chris Foulds, 52,** who has brought up the rear at 62 marathons and ultras

‘I began running in 2012 to lose weight, and it went well. In spring 2013, I did my first half marathon in Sheffield, and I thought it would be a good idea to run a marathon that September. It took me five and a half hours – very near the back, but I still finished.

In 2015, I tried a 50K and it wasn’t too catastrophic. A year later, I was doing my first 50-miler, the Lightning Run. I was lying in my tent after that screaming in pain; it hurt so much. It was a 10km trail lap race and I did 55 miles, but I was walking at the end.

The reason I like ultras is because no one cares when you finish, as long as you meet the cut-off. In 2017, I started building up for my first 100-miler. I thought Centurion’s Autumn 100 looked frightening – so it was probably worth doing. There was a 28-hour cut-off and it took me 26:34, and I thought this 100-mile lark wasn’t too bad. I don’t remember feeling worried I wouldn’t finish.

When I did the North Downs Way 100 in 2019, that was definitely not fine. It was the first time I DNFed at a 100, at about 82 miles. I couldn’t cope with the steepness of the hills. This year was my fourth attempt, and I came next to last, with eight minutes to spare. It was iffy for a while, but the volunteers were fantastic. I could feel their determination for me to finish at the last two checkpoints.

In 2020, I came last in the Centurion Autumn 100. I’ve always wanted to do that for some reason. It’s got a lot of style. You get a bit of cachet – although you’re last, you’ve still finished. And completing a 100-miler is big – it’s always special; never a done deal. It doesn’t matter how good you are. You don’t know what the weather will be like; it might change the terrain on the day. And you can’t bullshit your way through it. Endurance running rewards hard work – if you do the work, you’ll get the reward sooner or later. I train near where I live in Nottingham and can do between 40 and 70 miles a week.

My goal is to join the 100 marathon club. I have a spreadsheet of all my races, but I haven’t put in the times since 2020. For me, running is part of my identity. I don’t think about time; I just think I might as well do it now while I still can. I’ve got seven finishes at 100-mile races and they’re nearly all right at the back. Excellent value for money!’

Chris finished his first 100-mile race with a time of 26:34

Is it time to take the edge off?

Taking the competitive edge off your running can unlock other rewards

A WEALTH OF RESEARCH has shown that the simple act of running for its own sake does wonders for our physical and mental health. On the flip side, we know that putting too much pressure on ourselves to hit set targets can sap joy and reduce those benefits. Ask yourself, would you gain from a shift in mindset?

‘If we want to do things for self-determined reasons, purely for their own sake, then there are three factors you look to facilitate: competence, autonomy and relatedness,’ says James Beale, programme leader for MSc Sports Psychology at the University of East London. ‘If you keep those in mind, you have a good chance of not worrying about where you come.’

Competence means shifting the focus towards your own practice, while having autonomy over when and how you run means there’s no pressure from anyone else. It’s also important to feel related to other people, so you can build relationships unrelated to winning or losing. ‘It’s about focusing on engagement in a different way, rather than focusing on being competitive,’ says Beale.

So, next time you head out to smash a parkrun, consider whether a jog nattering with friends or family might actually be more valuable. You’ll be spending quality time together and you may finish with rewards beyond your age-grading.

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ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST LIGHTS IN BRITISH DISTANCE RUNNING, EMILE CAIRESS TALKS RECORDS, RUNNING IN NATURE AND REFUELLING WITH FISH AND CHIPS

►

INTERVIEW: RICK PEARSON **PHOTOGRAPHY:** PHILIP HAYNES

After a stellar 2022 that saw the 25-year-old Yorkshireman set five personal bests from 3000m to half marathon, tie Mo Farah's British 10K road record and take silver at the European Cross Country Championships in Turin, Emile Cairess shows no signs of slowing down. On 4 March, he broke the long-standing British 10-mile record, and he'll be lining up for his first crack at the marathon in London in April. Cairess approaches his running with a refreshing simplicity and genuine love of not just the sport, but the pure act itself and how it connects us to nature. He sat down with *RW* to share his passion, inspiration and goals for the future as time ticked by on his trusty Casio.

RUNNER'S WORLD: The inside intel says it was your mum who inspired you to start running?
EMILE CAIRESS: 'Yes, it's true. She ran every day to keep fit and, naturally, seeing her go out, I wanted to tag along. So I just started doing that. At first, I was holding her back, then over time I was able to finish a run with her and I just carried on from there. I started when I was quite young, probably about four, I'd say. So it was a struggle for me to make it around the block, but my mum was happy to let her run go out the window so I could tag along.'

RW: And by your teens, you had to make a decision between football and running?
EC: 'Yeah, it was quite a big thing for me to quit football because it's a big passion and I really love it, but the level I was reaching in running compared with the level I was reaching in football, together with how much I enjoyed running, it just didn't make sense for me to carry on with football. It wasn't a high standard, so some of the tackles were dangerous and you'd see people breaking their legs.'

RW: You went to a school – Bradford Grammar – with real running pedigree. Was that inspiring for you?
EC: 'There have been some top athletes there in the past – the Brownlees, Richard Nerurkar, the swimmer Adrian Moorhouse. Although the Cross Country Club wasn't the same as when those guys were attending because a few key figures, such as Tony Kingham, had left. But it was a nice feeling knowing that they had gone down the same path.'

RW: Was it always your plan to be an international athlete, or has your trajectory surprised you?
EC: 'A bit of both. I wouldn't say I thought I'd definitely be an international athlete. I did aspire to it, I knew it was something I really wanted and I worked hard towards it, but I can't say at 14 I was telling everyone I was gonna do it.'

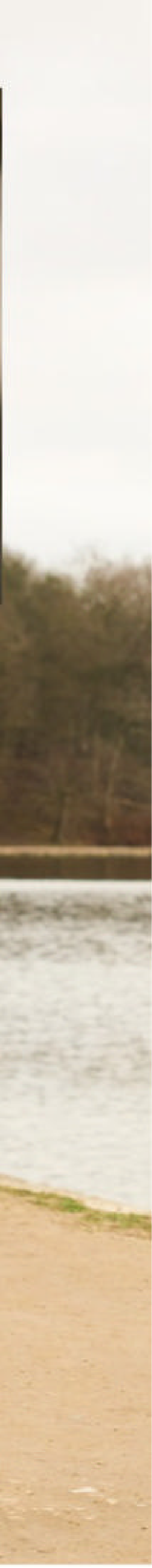
RW: You've worked with some amazing coaches, including Alan Storey, who trained Mo Farah. What's it been like learning under him, and your new coach, Renato Canova?

EC: 'It's invaluable having people like Alan and Renato to guide you. Because they've guided so many athletes to a level that I was aspiring to reach… and I'm still aspiring to get to. They have the blueprint of how to get there and you can't put enough value on that. Without those two, I wouldn't be in the position I'm in now.'

RW: You spent a few years training yourself. Do you feel you were getting anything seriously wrong in that time?
EC: 'I don't think I was getting too much wrong because I was making good progress. Obviously, I was making little mistakes, but I think having a coach with the blueprint expedites the process. It's less trial and error and more a definite, "If you do X, then you'll get Y." It was something I really enjoyed and I think it's beneficial in that you learn the purpose of training. That helps, even when you're being coached by someone else. When they give you your session, you understand more about how to do it effectively. So it was a really useful learning process for me.'

RW: What training session do you value the most?
EC: 'Some type of tempo running, or some people call it threshold running. I think they're the sessions that are most beneficial for events from 5K to the marathon. If you have a good threshold, you're really setting yourself up for success. You can always get into more specific kinds of training afterwards.'

RW: What will your threshold or tempo sessions look like in a marathon build-up?
EC: 'The London Marathon this April will be my first 26.2, so I'm not that experienced, but I think something like 3x5K or 4x5K. You can also look to run moderate sections in between instead of taking a rest. I don't think the specifics of the session are so important – it's more getting the right



Cairess laces up and sets out for a run with his (girlfriend's) ever-faithful Casio watch

CLOTHING (PREVIOUS SPREAD): SHORTS, ADIDAS ADIZERO SPLIT SHORT; VEST, ADIDAS ADIZERO SINGLET

‘HOLDING ALL THE BRITISH RECORDS IS MY GOAL’

CLOTHING (THIS SPREAD): JACKET, ADIDAS ADIZERO JACKET; TIGHTS, ADIDAS ADIZERO SATURDAY TIGHTS; SHOES, ADIDAS ADIZERO SL

amount of time or volume at a certain intensity. For me, 45 minutes to an hour at threshold in a session is the standard.’

RW: Equalling Mo Farah’s 10K road record caught everyone’s attention. How did it feel? Presumably he was someone you looked up to when you were young?
EC: ‘With Mo Farah, when I was younger and he was doing the 2012 Olympics, I was at such a different level that it felt like he was almost doing a different sport. I think most young runners maybe take inspiration from people, say, a year above them, or two years above them, which is more relatable. So while it was cool to see him on telly, it was more someone winning the Yorkshire cross-country that I was aspiring to be like. But equalling his record was a really cool achievement for me. To think that I was the fastest British runner over 10K on the road… if I’d told myself that when I was younger, I would’ve been shocked. But I feel Mo had kindly left the record there for the taking – it’s almost a minute slower than his time on the track, so it’s not quite the same level. But the way I was progressing and running only nine seconds slower on the track the summer before over 10,000m, it was definitely one of my goals for that period and it was really nice to do it.’

RW: Talking of records, what made you target Richard Nerurkar’s 30-year-old British 10-mile record? And what does it mean to have broken it?
EC: ‘Having gone to the same school as Richard makes a nice story, and eventually I’d like to set all the British road records. It was a good time to go for 10 miles, as it fitted with my London Marathon training. I’m really thankful to the guys at SportsShoes, Podium 5K and Adidas for setting up the opportunity for me to break it at Barrowford, in Lancashire, on the Podium circuit.

It all went pretty much to plan. I felt good in the early stages with the pacemakers, then the middle part was mentally tough, being on my own with quite a long way still to go. That was the most difficult part of the race, then on the last few laps I could sort of smell the finish and I knew if I could maintain the pace I’d be under the record. So it got easier towards the end rather than harder.

It was a good stepping stone towards the London Marathon and shows that my training has been going well – you can train well but it doesn’t always translate to racing, so it’s nice when it does. Obviously 10 miles is not one of the main race distances and I think Mo Farah and Callum Hawkins have probably split faster for 10 miles, so trying to get that half marathon record is definitely on my agenda for this year. I think you have to do everything in athletics step by step, but it’s also a real high point in a running career.’

RW: So the ambition is to hold all British road records?
EC: ‘That’s definitely something I’d like to do and I think they’re all achievable. Whether I do achieve them is a completely different story, but I think, as a runner, you always have to set yourself goals and then that motivates you to try your best to reach them. Without goals, I think it’s difficult to achieve big things. I don’t think anyone just stumbles upon stuff like that.’

RW: London will be your first marathon. Have you got clear ambitions, or is it more about trying to get things right on the day and seeing what happens?
EC: ‘My coach wants me to go conservatively and take it easy in the first half. As it’s the first one, he just wants me to have a good experience, so afterwards I can view the marathon in a positive way and not be fearful of it, which might happen if I go off really quick and struggle in the second half. If I can run a negative split, I’ll be happy. I’m not looking for ►

'I LOVE RUNNING IN THE WOODS'

any particular time or position, just a good, positive experience. Then later in the year, maybe at Valencia, I'll try to run a really fast time and attack it.'

RW: Phil Sesemann has certainly done very well at London over the past couple of years. Is it true you train together?
EC: 'Phil and I have trained a lot together since 2018/19. We're clubmates and he lives just down the road from me, so it's nice to see him doing so well at the marathon, especially as I feel like I encouraged him to move into it.'

RW: It looks like you're wearing a Casio watch in our shoot… is that your tech of choice?
EC: 'That particular Casio is actually my girlfriend's, but she bought me a different one because she was fed up with me wearing hers! I think just wearing a stopwatch takes some of the pressure off. A lot of people get too tied up in the exact pace of an easy run, a steady run – when all that really matters is that it's easy or steady. I have my routes and I know how far they are, so I do know my pace in the end, but while I'm running I've not really got any idea of the pace. I think it's good for you mentally to be a bit disengaged sometimes, rather than feeling stressed about things that don't need to be stressed about.'

RW: You're a great cross-country runner and Yorkshire is a beautiful county to run in. Do you have favourite spots?
EC: 'I love running in the woods and on the Leeds and Liverpool canal, the Meanwood Valley Trail and by Eccup Reservoir. My mum lives in Bradford and there are some lovely runs near her: up on Baildon Moor and the canal in Saltaire. I really do love running, and running in those places and enjoying nature, it's a feeling you can't beat.'

RW: How much of your running is on tarmac and how much is on softer surfaces?
EC: 'Pretty much all of it is off-road. A couple of sessions a week have to be on the track, or maybe on the road, but other than that, I try to always run on soft surfaces. I think it's a bit better for you in terms of injuries as it reduces the force going through your legs, but it's also more enjoyable to be running in a nice place. I've never found running on busy roads or even country lanes enjoyable – it doesn't feel as nice as when you're surrounded by nature.

I think everyone would benefit from running more off-road, physically and mentally. They would enjoy their running a lot more if they just sought out a route that was in nature. They would have a more pleasant experience and it would make that part of their day more enjoyable. At the end of the day, the main reasons people run are to enjoy it and for health, and I think running in nature fits into that really well.'

RW: What lessons did you learn while training in Kenya?
EC: 'I've been over there in January for the past three years and I think there's a multitude of benefits. One is that the weather is really bad in Yorkshire at that time of year, so you avoid the ice, the wind and the cold, while the climate is perfect over there. Then you have the benefits of altitude and being immersed in the training environment that produces some of the best runners in the world. It's really inspiring and humbling when you see how they achieve such success through a minimalistic lifestyle. In Britain, so many people get caught up in the minutiae of training and all the technology and specific food… they overcomplicate things. In Kenya, life is really simple. Many Brits could learn a lot from Kenyan people's attitude: just enjoy running and work really hard; do the basics such as sleeping and recovering well and that will lead to good performances.'

RW: Are you on a strict diet? Or is food more about fuelling your miles?
EC: 'It's more that I need to eat as much as possible. Because I'm doing so much training, I need to eat a lot to fuel it. It's simple: if you don't eat enough, you're not going to have enough energy to train properly. I think people get caught up in weight and body fat, etc. When you're training properly, I think you just need to eat as much as you can. Once you've ticked the box of eating enough, then maybe

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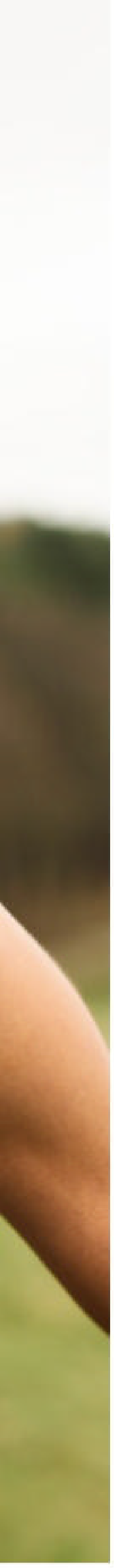

Opposite: Cairess has brought a Kenyan mindset back to Yorskshire **This page, top to bottom:** Cairess won silver at the European Cross Country Champs in December 2022; he set his track 10K PB of 27:34 at the Night of the 10,000m PBs in May 2022; Cairess breaks the British and European 10-mile record in March; immersed in nature on one of his favourite routes by Eccup Reservoir

look at the specifics of what you're eating, but I think the main thing to focus on is eating enough. Some people will think they're doing the right thing by having salad for tea, when actually a plate of fish and chips would be better for them if they've run 20 miles that day. Although obviously, it's even better if they have rice and chicken and broccoli…'

RW: What's your take on strength and conditioning work?
EC: 'It depends on the individual – some people are naturally stronger, but I think it's really important for someone like me. In running, your performance is determined by your energetic system and your biomechanical function. Like my coach says, 'There's no point having a Ferrari engine on tractor tyres.' The S&C is giving yourself the Ferrari tyres, that's the metaphor I like. If your legs are powerful and can produce a lot of force, it's easier to run faster. I think that comes more naturally to some people than others, so if you tend to feel like your breathing is okay but you just can't run any faster, then the gym will probably be beneficial. Then there's also injury prevention, but I tend to be quite lucky with that regardless of whether I work in the gym or not. For me, being able to run faster is the biggest benefit I get from it.'

RW: What does a typical S&C workout look like for you?
EC: 'I listened to a Richard Blagrove podcast. He's one of the foremost people in S&C and he said if you do a step-up, a hinge and a push exercise, then you're 90% of the way there. So if you're doing a squat, a Romanian deadlift and a step-up, all with pretty heavy weights and maybe 3x8 reps, it might not be the perfect routine, but you gain most of the benefits. After that, you can tailor it, maybe doing some calf work or plyometrics, but I keep it quite simple. I do one circuit session a week – squat jumps, jumping lunges and high knees – for muscular endurance. I've found that has been beneficial for me, especially in cross-country, where your legs do tend to start getting tired.'

RW: Do you have go-to shoes for racing different distances, and do you train in those?
EC: 'I'd definitely advise having different shoes for racing and training. Well, certainly for racing and easy running. Maybe your racing shoes can also be what you run harder sessions in, but definitely don't race in your easy-run shoes. I do easy runs in my Adidas Boston 10s. They've got a big stack height, which means you don't tend to feel little stones when you're in the forest. It's an unintended benefit because they're supposed to be for steady and tempo runs on the road rather than easy runs on trails, but they feel great. Then, for most races, I've worn the Adidas Takumi Sen. It's a stripped-down version of the Adios Pro. The Takumi has a stack height of 33mm compared with the Adios Pro's 39mm, so the Takumi still has a decent stack, but I feel it's just that bit more responsive. And because I don't weigh much, I do like a shoe that's a bit lighter. I love the Takumi and I think everyone should give them a go because they feel like a traditional racer that everyone will feel comfortable with, but they're a super shoe. You get the best of both worlds.'

RW: How do you relax when you're not running?
EC: 'I do like watching football. I'm a big Arsenal fan, so it's been a good season so far. I like playing video games, watching TV, spending time with my girlfriend, spending time with my family or with my girlfriend's family, having a nice time and just relaxing.' RW

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Ten supermarket staples to raise your performance

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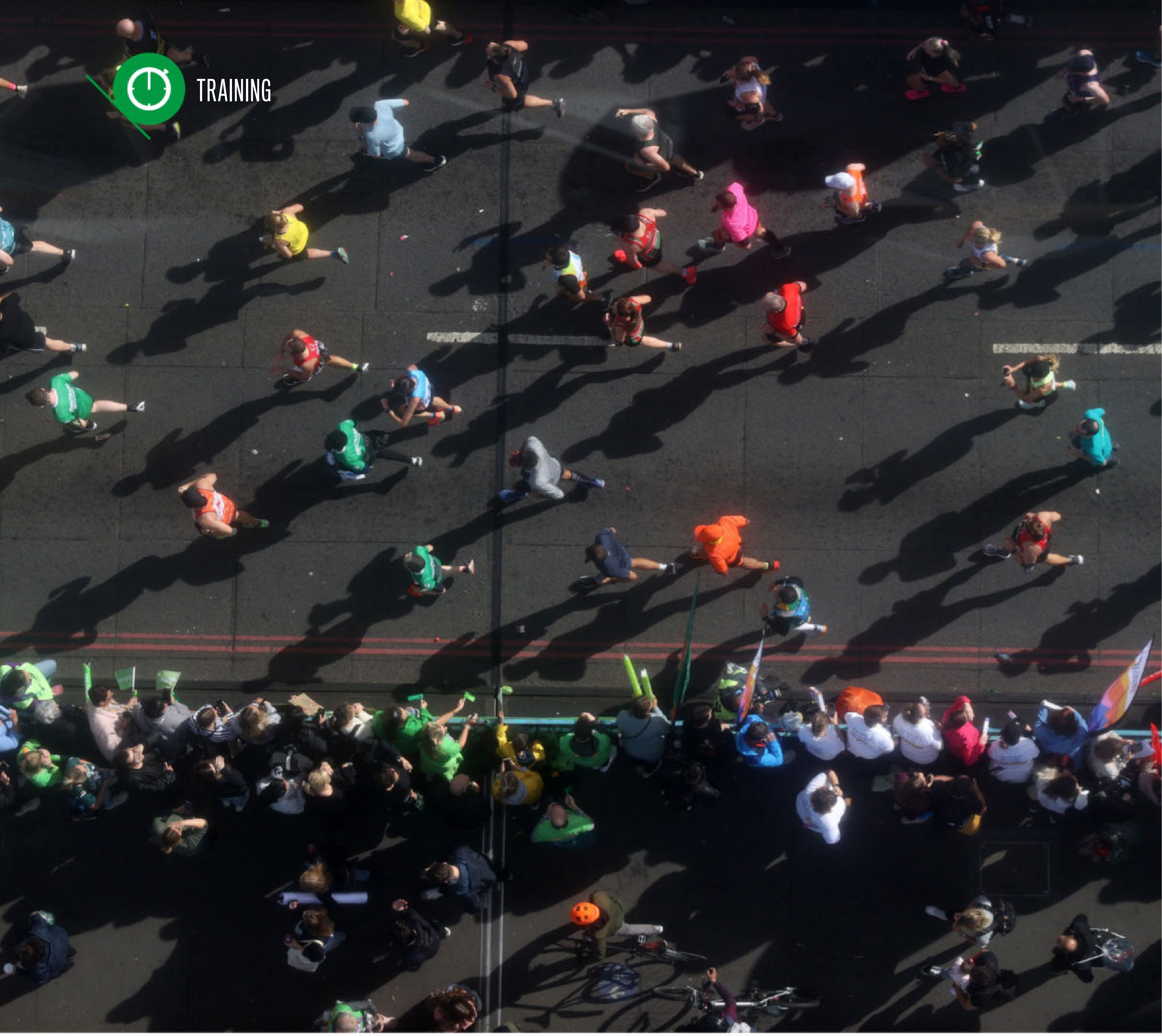


THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

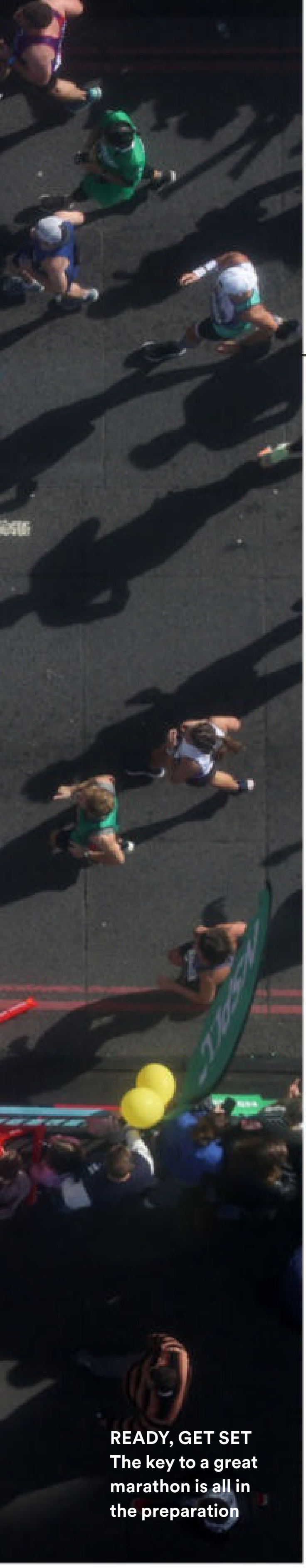
The training is done, but what you do in the last few days before a marathon can still make a big difference

THE MARATHON IS A TRUE TEST of physical and mental endurance, and having put months of hard work into your training, the last few days before the race are about the final finishing touches to your performance puzzle. The best approach is to strike a healthy balance between not overthinking every detail but paying attention to the things that can really make a difference on race day.

● Training

Fresh is best: Above all else, the focus of the final week should be on arriving at the race fresh and niggle-free. Ultimately, you're not going to gain more fitness at this stage. While I recommend keeping a good running frequency in race week (see below), if you have doubts, err on the side of caution and take extra rest.

Ticking over: Some reduction in training volume is logical in race week, but it's possible to cut back too far. Keep a good frequency of running, as this will help maintain the high blood volumes you've built up in training. Run the same number of times as in your normal training week. The overall volume of the runs will reduce by 30% to 50% compared with a full week from earlier in your training, but maintain some slightly quicker running around marathon effort and a little faster, avoiding big sessions in the final week.


READY, GET SET The key to a great marathon is all in the preparation

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

PERSONAL BEST

COACHING TIPS TO HELP YOU RAISE YOUR RUNNING GAME

BY TOM CRAGGS

FOCUS ON SELF-CARE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN RACE WEEK

Quit tracking: It's common to search for proof that you're ready, but race week is not the time for this. Consider ditching your GPS in race week, running to time and perceived effort. If you're doing quicker sessions, keep these to a 7 to 8/10 effort as an absolute maximum.

Drop the weight: Heavy strength training in the final days is likely to be an unnecessary risk. Remember that your goal to arrive at race day fresh includes not only running, but also your cross-training, strength work and even your commute. Consider low-impact conditioning rather than heavy weights and high-impact plyometric work before your race.

● Nutrition

Eat well: It's important to fuel your body with the right nutrients in the days leading up to the race with enough carbohydrates to top up your glycogen stores. It's also sensible to practise your pre-race meal a few times before the big day to ensure that it sits well with you. Avoid the risk of a heavy, bloated feeling on race day by maintaining or slightly increasing your carb intake in the final three or four days while reducing your training, rather than relying on a huge pasta blowout the day before the race.

Reduced residue: It's not uncommon for runners to struggle with stomach issues on race day. Reduce your chances of this happening by eating foods you're familiar with and eating your normal pre-long-run breakfast. A 'low residue' approach to nutrition – focusing on foods that provide the necessary energy but are easier to digest and lower in fibre – can be useful for some runners in race week.

Healthily hydrated: Proper hydration is key for maintaining your energy levels, health and performance. Be sure to drink plenty of fluid (over 1.5ltr a day) in the days leading up to the race. Electrolytes and salt supplements can be useful for runners who are 'salty sweaters' and lose a lot of salt in hot conditions – white marks on a dark top after a long run can be a sign of this.

● Lifestyle

Sleep well: Race week should involve as much mental and physical self-care as possible. Proper rest and recovery are essential for performing your best on race day. Aim for at least seven to eight hours of sleep each night in the week leading up to the race. It's easy to see a consistent routine pushed aside with travel and pre-race nerves. Stick to consistent sleep and wake times as much as you can.

Hands and face: Now is not the time to be picking up a respiratory illness. Look after your immune health and use your common sense in busy social environments. Keep a hand gel on you throughout the week and maintain good hand and face hygiene.

Share the load: Split the chores at work and home; if you have some leave to take from work this can help. Have an open conversation with friends and family, letting them know that they can expect you to be a little nervous and a little less rational this week.

● Practicalities

In and out: The final days before a big marathon can involve additional travel and other practicalities, so remember your energy levels will be affected by this. Aim to keep off your feet and make your travel arrangements as simple as possible. Race expos can be an exciting part of your race build-up, but they can also be draining. Try to minimise your time walking about, and now is not the time to buy new kit for race day.

Pack wisely: Make a list of everything you'll need on race day and anything you might be missing. This should include your race bib, timing chip, running clothes and shoes, fuel for before and during the race, and any other essentials such as sunscreen or lip balm. Pack an old top to wear in your pen before the start or a bin bag if it looks like it might rain, as well as an energy bar or banana to bridge the gap between your breakfast and the start of the race.

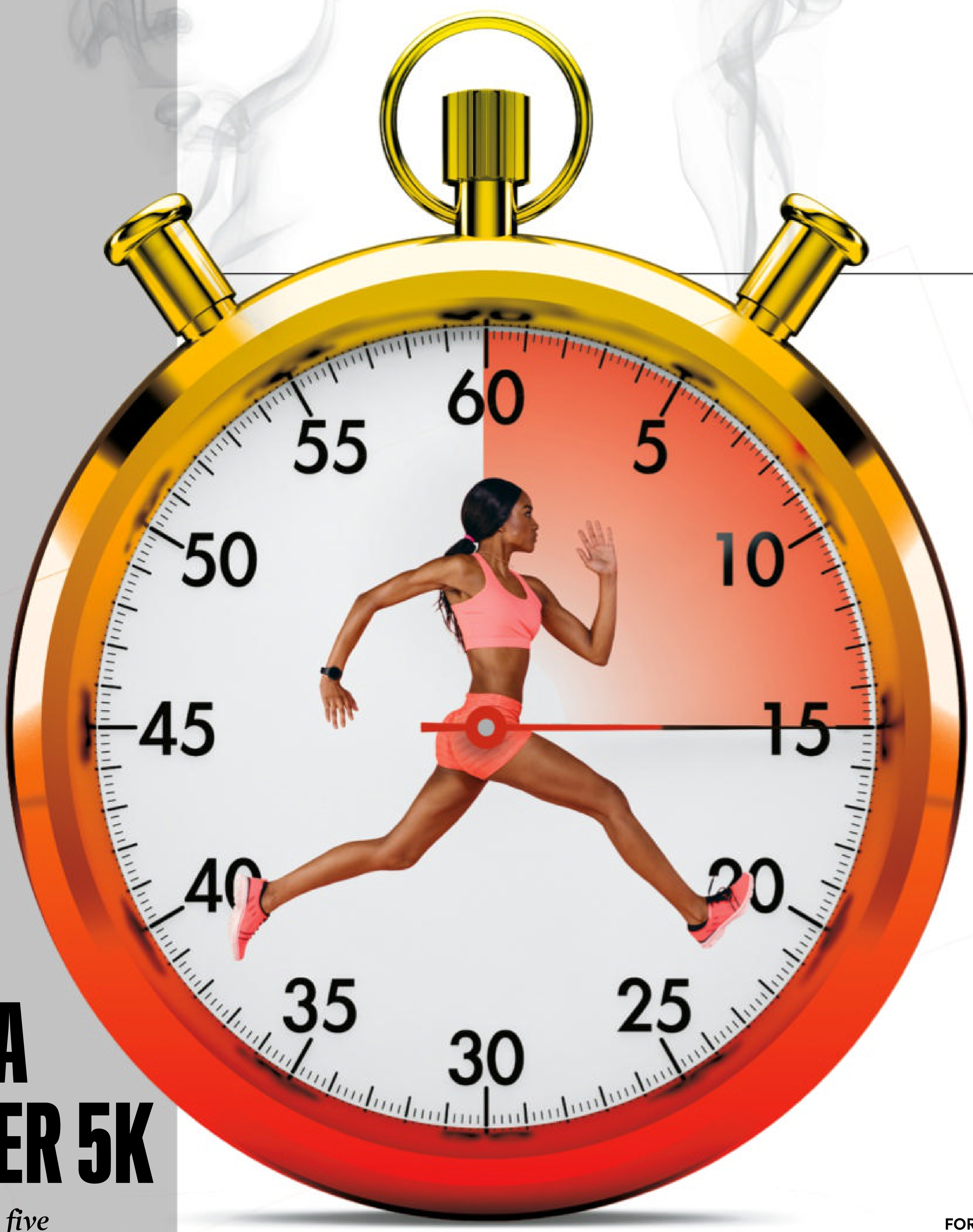
Route planning: Plan your route to the start line well in advance and take note of any road closures or public transport timetable changes, which often take place at weekends. Rushing on race day before the race is not conducive to a top performance. Plan to get to the start area around 75 minutes before the race begins as a minimum to allow plenty of time to get ready, drop your bag, wait in toilet queues and get into your pen.

● Mental prep

Settle your nerves: It's natural to feel anxious or nervous in the days leading up to the race, but it's important to find ways to manage your stress. Take your mind off the event if you possibly can. Consider practising relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or meditation, take a (short!) leisurely walk or do some light stretching to help you feel more calm and centred.

Find your bubble: There's no one 'right' way to train for a marathon. Put a bubble of positivity around yourself in the final week. Look back at your weeks and months of training and pick out the top five or so key positives, perhaps even work on a mantra you can carry with you on race day. Focus on the things that you can control and try not to get caught up in any unnecessary stress. With a little planning and preparation, you'll be ready to tackle the marathon and give it everything.

Tom Craggs is a coach and road running manager for England Athletics



PRESS FAST FORWARD Prep + persistence = speedier 5Ks

RUN A FASTER 5K

Adding these five structured speed sessions to your training could help you reach that new PB

NO MATTER WHAT DISTANCE you prefer, there's nothing quite like racing a 5K. Not only is it a rewarding distance to complete, but you can also run a few of them in one season. But in order to race fast, you've got to run fast in training. So, how fast is fast? Well, it depends on the runner, which is why these workouts are programmed by effort instead of a specific pace. This allows you to continue to practise these workouts as you get faster by monitoring your effort and adjusting as you get faster.

HOW TO GAUGE YOUR EXERTION

YELLOW ZONE	ORANGE ZONE	RED ZONE
This zone is the aerobic (or easiest) effort, and it's used for easy, recovery and long runs. Running at this effort allows you to run for a longer time, improves your fat-burning enzymes and isn't very stressful on the body. In this zone, you can talk easily without having to pause to catch your breath.	A moderate effort that hovers around your lactate threshold – when you shift from using fat for energy to glycogen. You're not running all-out, but above your comfort zone. We run in this zone during tempo runs and long intervals to raise speed endurance. You can only say a few words at a time when you're talking.	When you cross over your lactate threshold, you're in the red zone – well outside your comfort zone. This is the effort for short intervals, hill repeats and high-intensity workouts. This will improve fitness and speed, and boost your metabolism for hours post-workout. You shouldn't be able to talk.

Now you know the difference between zones, put them to the test with these five workouts to build speed – hopefully in a fun way – before race day.

► Start with the first workout (**1-min intervals**) once a week for three weeks.
► Progress to the second workout (**2-min intervals**) once a week for three weeks.
► Run the third workout (**1-2-3 intervals**) once a week for the weeks leading up to your 5K race. It's best to run this on flat, predictable terrain such as a path, road or track.

These interval workouts build speed, but the **3 x 1-mile tempo workout** will improve stamina to run faster and more efficiently for longer periods. The key is to run at the right effort (your 'red line') so you can raise your lactate threshold.

Run this workout once a week and at least two days away from the interval run. If you're new to running speed workouts, alternate this workout with the interval workout every other week, so you're running one hard workout per week. Take note of your pace as you progress, as you'll cover the mile more quickly as you improve.

Another key element of fitness for running a fast 5K is to build your endurance – or the ability to cover longer distances efficiently. For the 5K, that means running 5 to 6 miles once a week at a yellow zone effort.

You can weave in a **progressive endurance workout** every two to three weeks. This combines all three effort zones – yellow, orange, red – and teaches you how to run in all three zones, which is an effective skill for pacing yourself on race day.

Finally, many a race is won and lost in the **warm-up** and pre-race prep. The shorter the race, the more intricate the warm-up should be, as racing for a 5K PB demands that you start out running hard, then go harder. The more you invest in a warm-up, the more easily your body will be able to push when the gun goes off. Use this warm-up (bottom right) on race day. Aim to finish it 10 mins before the start.

WORDS: JENNY HADFIELD. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

5K SPEED-BUILDING WORKOUTS

01

8 X 1-MIN INTERVALS

Total workout time: 37 mins

► Walk and/or do dynamic stretches (such as walking lunges, side lunges, side-to-side and front-to-back leg swings) for 3 mins to warm up.
► Run 10 mins at an easy effort.
► Run 1 min at a hard but controlled effort in the red zone.
► Follow with 1 min of walking to catch your breath and recover.
► Repeat 1-min on/1-min off interval, 7 times for 8 total intervals.
► Run 5 mins at an easy effort.
► Walk 3 mins to cool down completely.

02

6 X 2-MIN INTERVALS

Total workout time: 45 mins

► Walk and/or perform dynamic stretches for 3 mins to warm up.
► Run 10 mins at an easy effort.
► Run 2 mins at a hard but controlled effort in the red zone.
► Follow with 1 min of walking then 1 min of very easy running to recover.
► Repeat 2 mins hard, 2 mins recovery, 5 times
► Run 5 mins at easy effort.
► Walk 3 mins to cool down completely.

03

1-2-3 INTERVALS

Total workout time: 57 mins

► Walk and/or perform dynamic stretches for 3 mins to warm up.
► Run 10 mins at an easy effort.
► Run 1 min at a hard but controlled effort in the red zone, followed by 1 min of easy running.
► Run 2 mins in the red zone, then 1 min of easy walking and 1 min of easy running.
► Run 3 mins in the red zone followed by 1 min of walking and 2 mins of easy running.
► Repeat the 1-2-3 intervals 3 times in total.
► Run 5 mins at easy effort.
► Walk 3 mins to cool down.

04

3 X 1-MILE TEMPO WORKOUT

Total workout distance: 4 to 5 miles

► Walk and/or perform dynamic stretches for 3 mins.
► Run 10 mins at an easy effort.
► Run 1 mile at an effort just outside your comfort zone (that's the upper edge of orange).
► Walk for 2 mins to recover (take more time if needed).
► Repeat the mile effort and recovery 2 times for 3 in total.
► Run 5 mins at an easy effort.
► Walk 3 mins to cool down.

05

PROGRESSIVE ENDURANCE WORKOUT

Total workout distance: 5 to 6 miles

► Walk and/or perform dynamic stretches for 3 mins.
► Run 2 miles at an easy effort in the yellow zone.
► Run 1 mile in the orange zone, just outside your comfort zone.
► Run 1 mile in the red zone, a hard-but-controlled effort.
► Run 1 mile just outside your comfort zone, at the upper edge of the orange zone or an effort during which you can no longer talk in sentences.
► Walk 2 mins to recover (take more time if needed).
► Run 5 mins at an easy effort.
► Walk 3 mins to cool down completely.

RACE-DAY WARM-UP

Total warm-up time: around 15 mins

► Walk briskly for 3 mins to wake up your muscles, add some dynamic stretches.
► Run 5 mins at an easy, conversational effort.
► Run 3 mins at a moderate to hard effort (not all-out).
► Run 6 × 15-sec accelerations (progress the speed to close to a sprint, then walk it out to recover).
► Perform 4 × 15-sec skipping drills (focusing on pushing off your toes and reaching your body forwards versus up in the air).

MASTER THE MOVE

ROTATIONAL LUNGE

This exercise is a triple threat: a hard-working warm-up move, strength-builder and full-body conditioning staple

WHY IT'S WORTH DOING: a standard reverse lunge, which works your quads and glutes while building stability, is unilateral (read: single-sided). Now, let's add a plot twist – by rotating your torso during the lunge, you'll recruit more of your core to maintain balance, as well as the hip abductors, which become shortened from sitting, says strength coach Kehinde Anjorin. Give this versatile favourite a go.

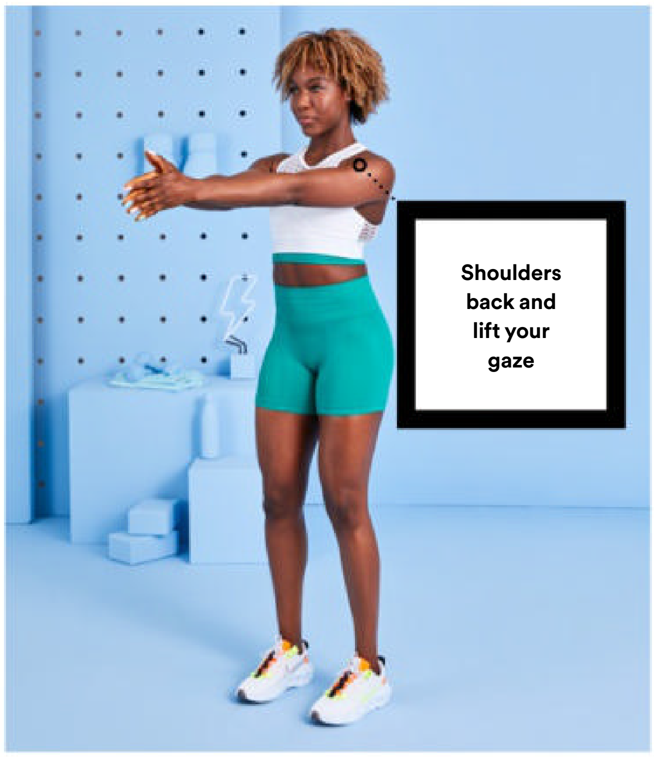
How to do it

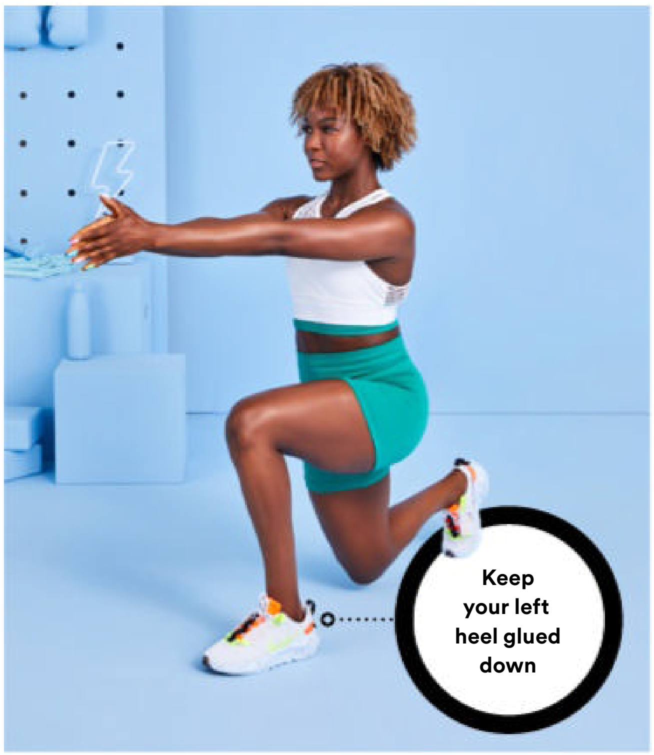
1/ Stand with your feet hip-width apart, arms extended forwards at chest height, hands pressed together.

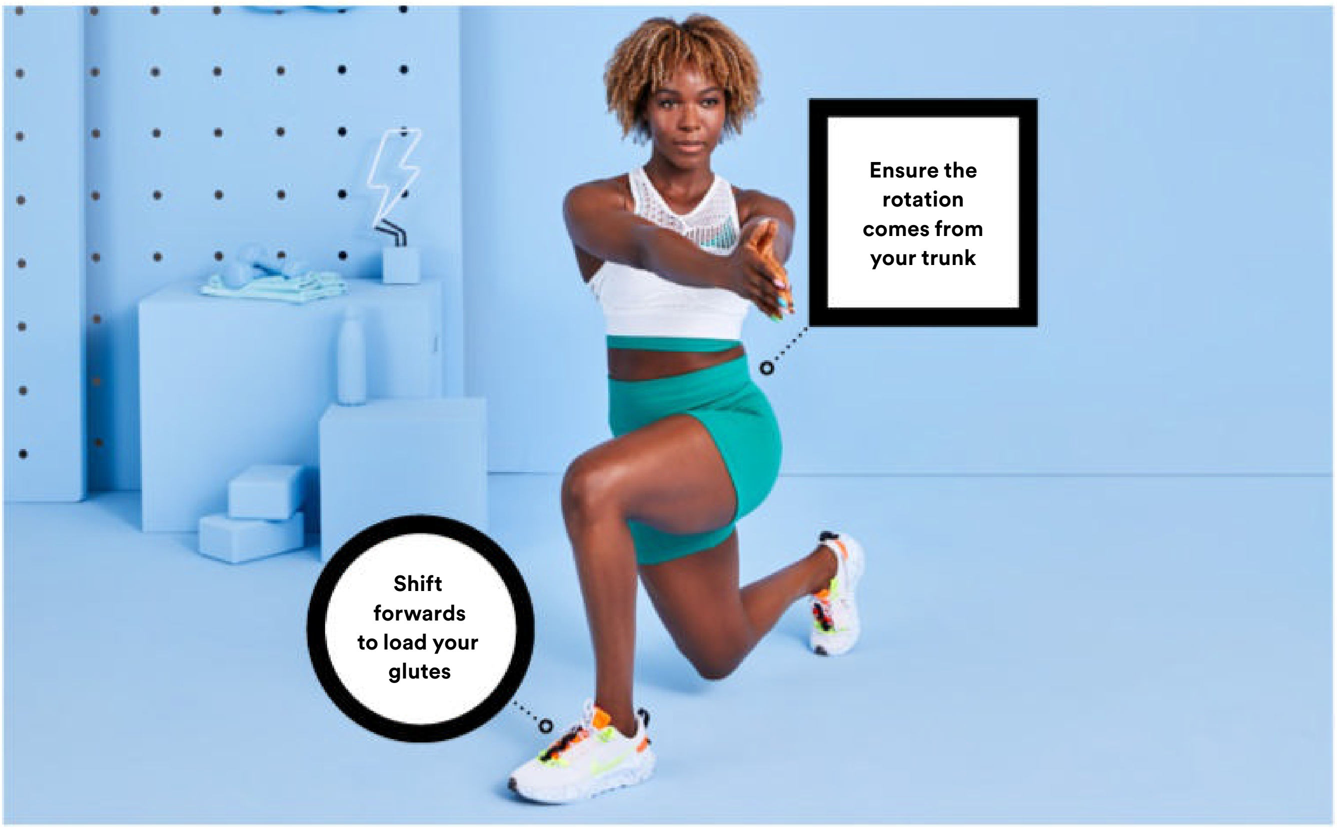
2/ Engage your core, then step back with your right leg into a lunge. Keep your chest upright.

3/ Twist your torso to the left, keeping your chest and spine tall. Pause here.

4/ Reverse to the start position, then repeat on the other side.


Shoulders back and lift your gaze


Keep your left heel glued down


Ensure the rotation comes from your trunk
Shift forwards to load your glutes

WORK IT IN
Try 3 sets of 10 reps as part of a dynamic warm-up, or perform the lunge after big moves such as squats and deadlifts.

LEVEL UP
Create your own conditioning workout by alternating between short bursts of cardio and 10 reps of the rotational lunge for a number of sets.

UP THE RESISTANCE
If you can easily execute the body-weight move, try holding a medium dumbbell. The weight may pull your torso forwards, but resist and maintain a neutral, tall spine and square hips. You've got this.

WORDS: CAITLIN CARLSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHRYN WIRSING. STYLING: ANN WANG. HAIR: MADISON SULLIVAN/HONEY ARTISTS. MAKE-UP: JENNIFER NAM/HONEY ARTISTS. TOP AND SHORTS, ALALA; SHOES, NIKE

RHYTHM & GRIT

A FRESH TAKE ON MAXIMISING YOUR RUNNING ENJOYMENT

BY CORY WHARTON-MALCOLM

STEP IT UP

Simple and fun ways new runners can progress their workouts

MAYBE YOU'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH RUNNING, or you just a like it a bit. Either way, you've been banking miles steadily for a few months now and feel like it's time to progress, but you're not quite sure how. Here are a few simple – and hopefully fun – ideas to help you up the ante.

01 Strides

You could add a few strides to your warm-up. These are short bursts of speed with a recovery in between. They're normally around 100m in length, starting off at a jog and accelerating gradually to around 80% to 95% of your maximum speed before easing off. Try five or six, with one-minute recoveries, before an easy run.

02 Finishing kick

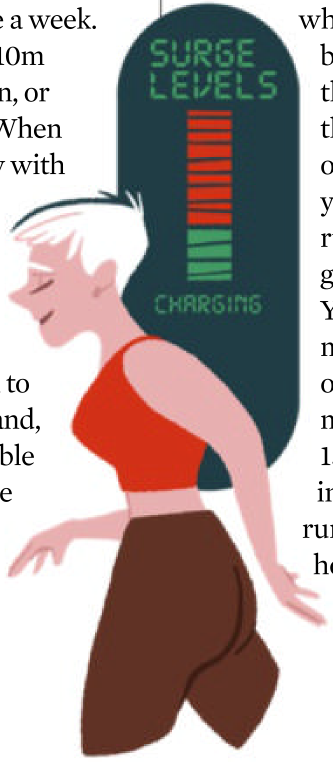
You could add a faster burst to finish easy runs once or twice a week. You can kick from as little as 10m away from the end of your run, or further out if you feel like it. When you kick, build pace gradually with each stride, as if you're going through the gears. When you get to a pace you can just about hold, maintain it until you cross your finish line. It requires focus and good form to run faster when you're tired and, over time, you'll get comfortable running faster and will be able to hold a pace that was once tricky for a bit longer.

03 Fartlek

This is a form of unstructured speedwork (the term is Swedish for 'speed play') that involves varying pace as you desire. It could be as simple as picking up the pace every few minutes, every time you see a yellow car or pass the third lamp post, and so on. The idea is to make faster running fun, as it helps keep you engaged.

04 Surges

You can also surge mid-run, which is the same as kicking but you pick up the pace in the middle of a run instead, then continue at your original pace. This means you have to recover while running, which makes it good for stamina building. You could do this for a minute every five minutes on a 30-minute run, for five minutes in the middle of a 15-minute run or for a mile in the middle of a three-mile run, depending on fitness or how you feel on the day.



Cory is a running coach and founder of TrackMafia running. Instagram: @bitbeefy, @trackmafia_

05 Hills

With hills, you're running against the resistance of gravity, which makes them great strength and speed workouts in disguise. Once a week, find yourself a nice hilly route. This might be a one- or two-mile loop with a couple of long hills that you run continuously, or you could find a shorter, steeper hill and run up it five or six times, recovering as you run back down to your start position.

06 Simple drills

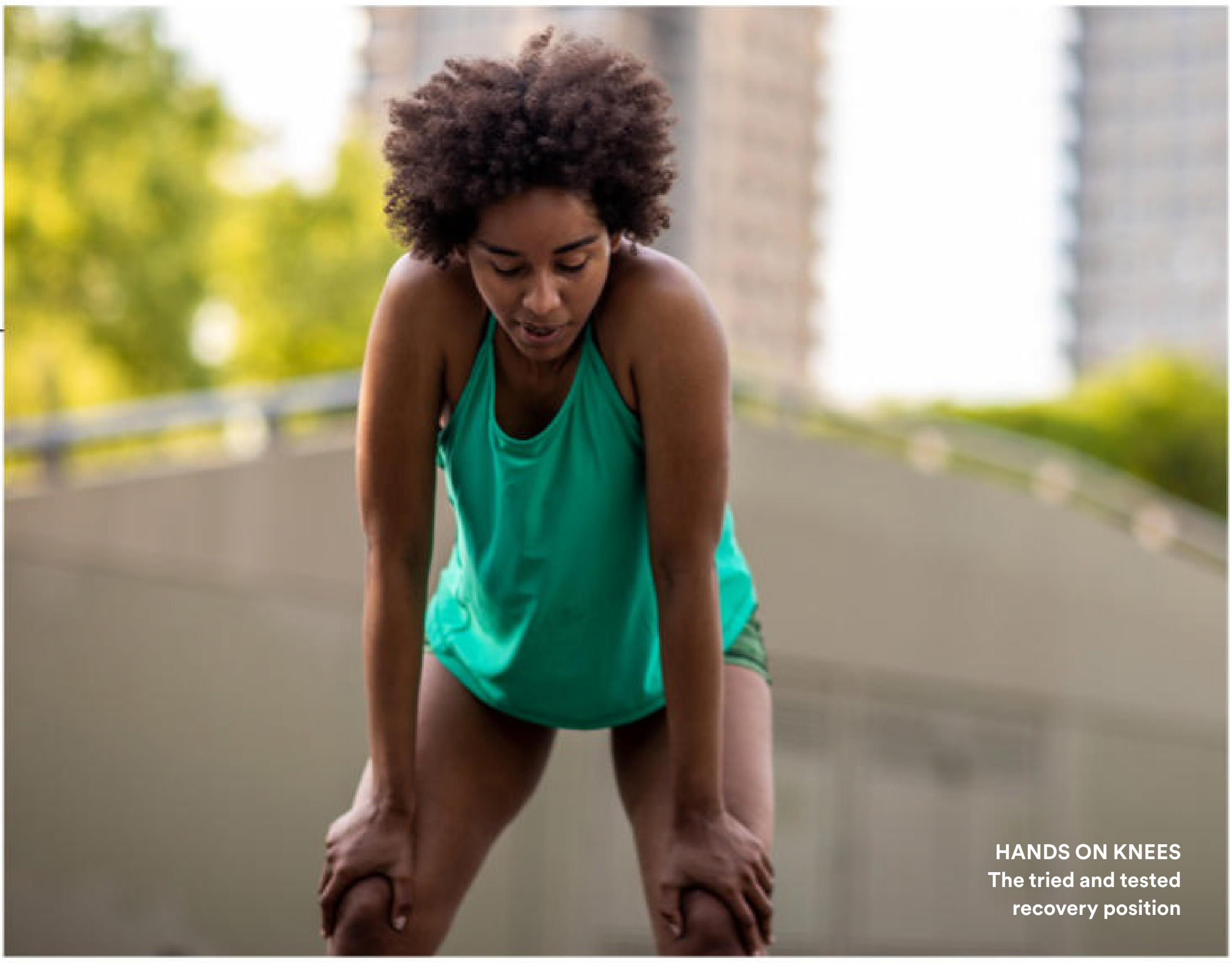
Here are a few running drills to prepare your body for all this kicking, surging and fartleking. They'll also strengthen your legs, glutes and core, in turn helping you to become a more efficient runner. You can do each drill while moving forwards for 10 to 15 seconds at first, working your way up to 30 seconds.

- Fast feet – think crushing grapes underneath your feet while taking short, fast steps.
- High knees – lift your thighs to horizontal with each step.
- Bum kicks – kick your heels up towards your bum.
- Skipping – remember heading to the shop as a kid to get your favourite sweets.
- Crab – move forwards sideways on, just like a crab.
- Bounding – strong, powerful skipping with high knees.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM NICKEL AT SYNERGY ART

RECOVERY POSITION

The best way to get over a hard effort is down to science and physiology, says sports scientist Ross Tucker



HANDS ON KNEES
The tried and tested recovery position

WHEN I STARTED RUNNING in high school, my coach forced me to put my hands on my head and stand tall when recovering from track intervals. My default had been to bend over and put my hands on my knees. I remember doing it and instantly feeling worse than when I was bent over. Almost 30 years later, my experience has been backed up by research. Researchers from Western Washington University got 20 women footballers to do hard four-minute running repeats on a treadmill, recovering for three minutes either with their hands on their knees or their heads. They then measured heart and breathing rates to compare.

● Knees up

The results suggest the hands-on-knees position outperforms the hands-on-head method in many key variables for better recovery. I say 'suggest', because the study didn't measure performance directly; it used physiological measurements to infer whether athletes had recovered better.

For instance, they measured heart-rate recovery – the degree to which heart rate decreases in the first minute after each bout of running – and found that with hands on knees, it dropped by 53 beats, compared with 31 when standing up with hands on head. They also measured tidal volume – the amount of air inhaled with each breath – and that, too, was better with hands on knees, by about 10%. Not a slam dunk, but these differences suggest the athletes would be better recovered for subsequent exercise after hands-on-knees recovery. If they'd measured performance in a few trials after this demanding training bout, the theory might have been confirmed.

Regardless, there's also theory behind these findings. Getting your head to the level of your heart may help with blood-pressure regulation, because your heart no longer has to pump against gravity. Secondly, when you're bent over, your main breathing muscle, the diaphragm, is in a more effective position than when you're standing – particularly if you also put your hands on your head, which stretches your thorax and abdominal muscles, making them less useful for contributing to breathing. The hands-on-knees approach causes your ribcage to rotate internally and optimises how well your diaphragm works.

● Auto-regulation

There's also perception. Have you ever stood up too fast, felt light-headed and known the best thing to do is sit down or bend over and gather yourself? That's your body dealing with a blood-pressure challenge. The point is, your body is good at regulating its own physiology. That's why our default action when tired and gasping for air is often to bend over. And if it feels better, in terms of exercise, it usually is.

Professor Ross Tucker is one of the world's leading sports scientists and co-host of the *Real Science Of Sport* podcast. Follow him on Twitter @scienceofsport

TRY IT FOR YOURSELF

Test both postures using the heart-rate recovery method described in the study

Day 1

Perform a hard running session that you do frequently. This might be a track interval session, a hard 5K loop or some hill repeats – anything that gets your heart rate up to near its maximum level. As soon as you finish, note your heart rate. Then stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, bend at the waist and rest your hands on your knees, elbows bent, for one minute. Then note your heart rate again and record the difference between it at the end of the run and the one-minute recovery. If you're doing an interval session, do this after each rep for a more reliable outcome.

Day 2

Repeat everything as closely as possible – do an identical session, run the same pace or times for the repeats. But this time, recover in the hands-on-head position: stand upright with your legs shoulder-width apart, tall and straight, and clasp your hands behind your head for one minute.

Compare your heart-rate recovery figures for the two days. The higher one indicates your preferred recovery posture.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

FOOD TO GO

EXPERT NUTRITION ADVICE
TO FUEL YOUR RUNNING

By Renee McGregor

Bone up on calcium

This mineral is key to healthy bones and more, so runners need to get enough

One of the most underrated minerals, calcium plays a huge part in many of the body's biological processes. Best known for its role in bone and dental health, it's also involved in muscle contraction, maintaining blood pressure and blood clotting.

How much do I need each day?

There's no benefit to excessive intake of calcium, but meeting your recommended daily amount is encouraged for optimal health. For men, this translates as 1,300mg for those aged nine to 18, 1,000mg for 19 to 70 and 1,200mg for over 70s. For women, it's 1,300mg for nine to 18-year-olds, 1,000mg for 19 to 50, and 1,200mg for those over 51 – due to decreasing oestrogen levels in menopause and increased risk to bone health. (See below for what this means in terms of food.)

What if I don't get enough?

One of calcium's key roles is promoting bone growth up until age 30, then the maintenance of bone health from that point on. For runners, bone health is a critical factor to consider. While 70% of our bone health is genetic, lifestyle, nutritional and hormonal status also contribute.

Ensuring adequate calcium intake is necessary to maintain calcium levels in blood – required for biological function. If the body doesn't get sufficient calcium, it will release calcium ions from bone. If this isn't replaced, bone loses density and becomes weak, increasing your risk of bone injury and stress fractures.

Contrary to what you might think, osteopenia (reduced protein and mineral content in bone tissue) and osteoporosis (where the bones become brittle) aren't just related to old age. They can affect anyone, and runners, particularly those who have low energy availability, can be at a higher risk.

Bone health isn't just dependent on calcium intake. Our reproductive hormones, testosterone and oestrogen, play a vital role. So it's important that we consume sufficient energy to maintain regulation. For women, that means regular periods throughout their adult life until menopause (excluding pregnancy and breastfeeding). The most common reasons periods stop are if women under-fuel, under-recover or have high emotional stress. Men should aim to maintain testosterone levels of at least 10 nanomoles per litre – a blood test can measure this. It's the combination of optimal nutrition and adequate calcium that supports bone health.

What are the best food sources?

Dairy products and bony fish, such as sardines. But there are also non-dairy sources – soya, tofu, beans, nuts, seeds and green leafy vegetables. Amounts are lower (with the exception of soya) and absorption can also be less efficient from leafy vegetables. Obtaining 1,200mg of calcium from food could involve something like this:

- **240ml cow's milk (300mg)**
- **150g dairy yoghurt (350mg)**
- **120g canned sardines (370mg)**
- **21g almonds (95mg)**
- **85g kale (94mg)**

Do I need a supplement?

As with all nutrients, a food-first approach is advised. Milk and yoghurt make great recovery choices post-run. Studies have shown that taking on excessive supplementary intakes of calcium has been linked to potential cardiovascular events. Check with your GP if you think you might be deficient.

Renee McGregor is a leading sports dietitian with over 20 years' experience. reneemcgregor.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: ASILLO 3D

EVERYDAY HEROES

These 10 supermarket staple foods offer multiple health, performance and recovery benefits for runners

MOST SUPERMARKETS stock more than 30,000 items, yet every time we race up and down the aisles or do our shopping online, we usually toss the same 10 to 15 foods into our trolleys. Which isn't such a bad thing, as long as you're taking home the right foods – ones that will keep you healthy, fuel peak performance and easily make lots of delicious meals. Make sure the following 10 foods are on your healthy grocery list.

01

Almonds

Almonds are a great source of vitamin E, an antioxidant that many runners fall short on as there are so few good sources of it. Studies show that eating a small handful of nuts several times a week lowers circulating cholesterol levels, particularly the artery-clogging LDL type, decreasing your risk of heart disease. **Serving suggestion:** Mix with dried fruit and chocolate bits as a trail mix. Or spread almond butter on wholegrain toast and top with banana.

02

Sweet potatoes

A single 100-calorie sweet potato supplies more than two and a half times the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for vitamin A in the form of beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant. Sweet potatoes are also a good source of vitamin C, potassium, iron and the trace minerals manganese and copper – crucial for healthy muscle function. **Serving suggestion:** They can be baked, boiled or microwaved. You can fill them with chilli or cheese, or incorporate them into stews and soups. They're also tasty chopped into wedges and baked in the oven.

03

Eggs

One egg fulfils about 10% of your daily protein needs, and the protein in eggs contains all the essential amino acids your muscles need for recovery. Eat one of these nutritional powerhouses and you'll get about 30% of your RDA of vitamin K, which is vital for healthy bones. Eggs also contain choline, a brain nutrient that aids memory, and lutein, needed for healthy eyes. **Serving suggestion:** Boiled, poached, scrambled or fried (in a non-stick pan to cut down on the need for added fats), eggs are great any time. Whip them into omelettes or frittatas, or add to sandwiches or wraps as fillers.

04

Wholegrain pasta

Pasta has long been a runner's best friend because it contains easily digestible carbs that help restock spent glycogen (energy) stores. Wholegrain versions are a must over refined pastas because they contain more fibre to fill you up; additional B vitamins, which are crucial to energy metabolism; and disease-fighting compounds such as lignans. **Serving suggestion:** Pasta makes a complete one-pot meal – perfect for busy runners – when tossed with vegetables, lean meat, seafood or tofu. Or combine pasta with a light sauce and a bit of your favourite cheese to turn it into a satisfying pasta bake.

05

Tinned black beans

One 180g serving of these beauties provides 30% of the RDA for protein, almost 60% of your RDA for fibre and 60% of the RDA for folate, a B vitamin that plays a key role in heart health and circulation. In addition, black beans and other legumes are low glycaemic index (GI) foods, meaning the carbohydrate in them is released slowly into the body, which can help control blood sugar levels and may enhance performance due to their steady release of energy. **Serving suggestion:** For a quick, recovery-boosting broth, open a can of black beans and pour into chicken or vegetable stock along with frozen mixed veg and your favourite seasonings. Or add beans to cooked pasta or rice for extra fibre and protein.

06

Frozen stir-fry vegetables

Research shows that eating a combination of antioxidants, such as beta-carotene and vitamin C, may lessen muscle soreness after hard workouts by reducing the inflammation caused by free-radical damage. Most ready-to-use stir-fry veggie combos offer a potent mix of antioxidants by including red and yellow peppers, onions, pak choi and soya beans. And frozen vegetable mixes save lots of prepping time but still provide the same nutrition as their fresh counterparts.

Serving suggestion: Dump into a hot wok, add tofu, seafood or meat, a stir-fry sauce and serve over brown rice. You can also mix into soups or stews.

07

Chicken

Runners need 50% to 75% more protein than non-runners to help rebuild muscles and promote recovery. Just one 115g serving of chicken can supply about half a runner's daily needs. Chicken also contains selenium, a trace element that helps protect muscles from free-radical damage that can occur during exercise, and niacin, a B vitamin that helps regulate fat burning.

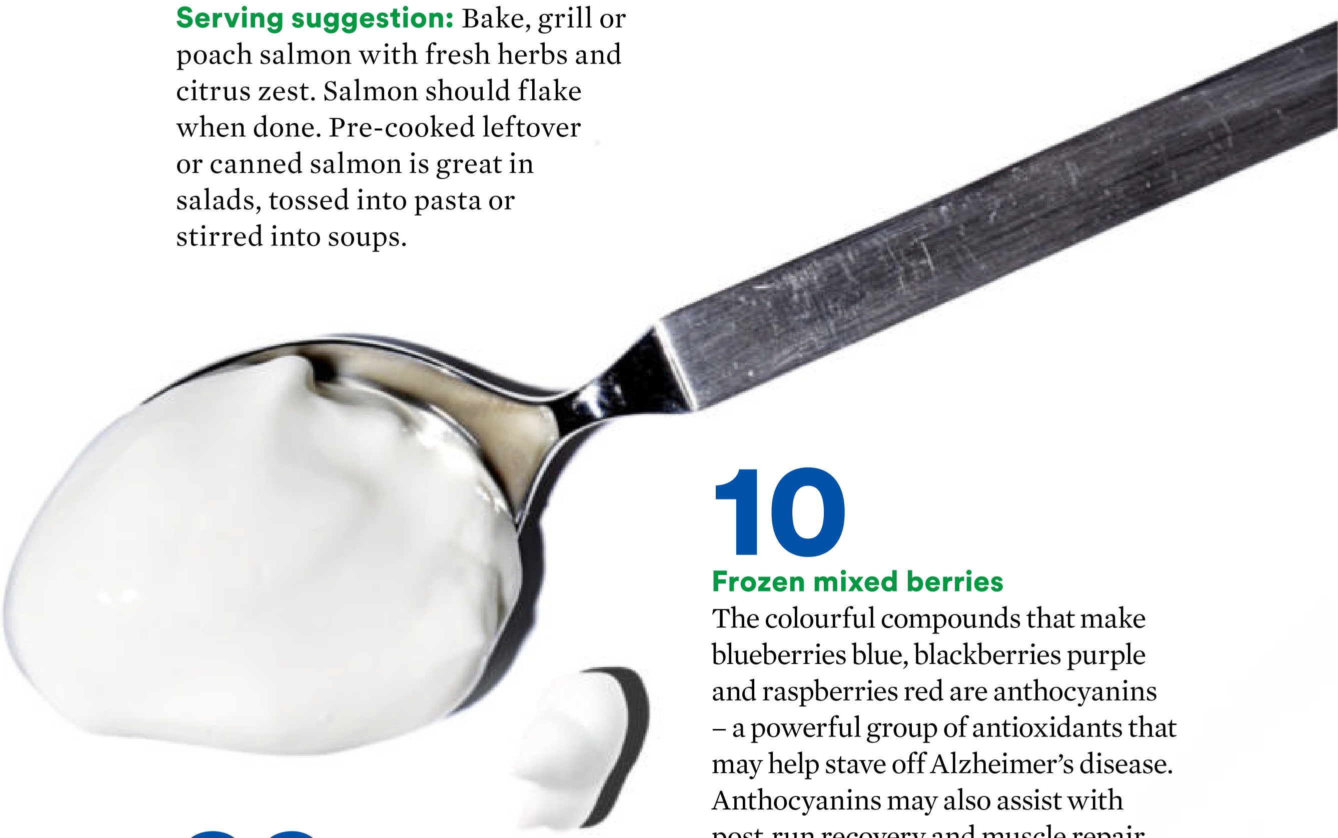
Serving suggestion: Chicken works well on top of salads, mixed into pasta or stuffed into sandwiches and burritos.

08

Salmon

Besides being an excellent source of high-quality protein (you get about 30g in a 115g serving), salmon is one of the best food sources of omega-3 fats. These essential fats help balance the body's inflammation response.

Serving suggestion: Bake, grill or poach salmon with fresh herbs and citrus zest. Salmon should flake when done. Pre-cooked leftover or canned salmon is great in salads, tossed into pasta or stirred into soups.



09

Yoghurt

Besides being a good source of protein and calcium (250g provides 13g of protein and 40% of calcium), yoghurt with live cultures provides the healthy bacteria your digestive tract needs to function optimally. This good bacteria may also have anti-inflammatory powers that can offer relief to those with arthritis.

Serving suggestion: Top yoghurt with fruit, granola or nuts, or use as a base for smoothies. Plain yoghurt can be mixed with diced cucumber and herbs and spread over grilled tofu or chicken.

10

Frozen mixed berries

The colourful compounds that make blueberries blue, blackberries purple and raspberries red are anthocyanins – a powerful group of antioxidants that may help stave off Alzheimer's disease. Anthocyanins may also assist with post-run recovery and muscle repair. And remember: frozen berries are just as nutritious as fresh, but they keep far longer (up to nine months in the freezer).

Serving suggestion: A great base for smoothies. Once thawed, add to yoghurt with nuts. Or liven up your cereal with a handful. You can also bake berries with a topping of oats, honey and chopped almonds.

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WORDS: LIZ APPLEGATE. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; STUDIO 33; DAN MATTHEWS; ELLIS PARINDER; LUCKY IF SHARP; LOUISA PARRY

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Shoe buyer's guide

RUNNER'S WORLD
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RUNNER'S WORLD BEST IN TEST May 23

These days, you'll often read the message not to buy new shoes in the pages of *RW*. To reduce the colossal footprint of the global trainer industry, we support the idea of running every possible mile in the shoes you already own, revelling in every last run you can share. But ultimately the time will come when they can take you no further and, when it does, we want to ensure you pick the perfect sole mates to carry you through the next chapter of your running story. Shoes that will give you joy with every step, that you'll only give up on when they're truly at the end of their lifespan. That's why we've spent months putting the latest models through their paces – over thousands of miles on the feet of hundreds of wear-testers – to find the most deserving of a place in the final 25 featured on the following pages. We evaluated all shoes over a range of paces in different types of sessions and varied conditions for qualities including cushioning, stability, flexibility, responsiveness, traction and overall ride. Time to find your perfect fit...

01

KIPRUN KD900X

TYPE Performance
PRICE £129.99
WEIGHT 225g (M), 182g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

THE SPECIALIST RUNNING brand of the sports retailer Decathlon, Kiprun has established itself as a maker of quality running shoes at great value prices. And as its first carbon-fibre plate shoe, the KD900X certainly has a compelling USP – to offer super-shoe benefits at around half the typical cost. At first glance, all the key ingredients are here – it's light, with a Pebax-based midsole foam, and the Vaporfly-style upper is minimalist to cut down on weight, with a thin tongue and a couple of internal foam pads to act as a heel counter. But on the run, while it undoubtedly feels light, you don't get the recognisable springiness of the best carbon shoes, and the ride is on the firmer side. Kiprun says the shoe is more durable – it was run in for 1,500km by one of its testers – but there's no way of testing this claim in the short term. On the plus side, the shoe feels stable and sure-footed, even on cambered surfaces and when cornering, a feeling enhanced by the excellent grip in all conditions. But ultimately, while it's a decent lightweight option for speed sessions or race day, those looking for super shoe-type energy return should probably look elsewhere.

02

ON CLOUDSURFER

TYPE Max-cushioned
PRICE £150
WEIGHT 245g (M), 205g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm

ON SHOES HAVE HAD a reputation for a firmer-feeling ride than most. The latest version of the Cloudsurfer, however, completely bucks that tradition – you can feel the plush, pillowy cushioning immediately. The Swiss brand has redesigned the midsole from the model's previous version, removing the Speedboard plate and introducing CloudTec Phase – the hollow pods are inside the Helion foam midsole rather than underneath it, and positioned at varying diagonal to horizontal angles, like a line of falling dominoes. The fact that you can easily compress the midsole with your hands gives a sign of the cushioning to come. On the run, the result is a wonderfully comfortable ride. The Cloudsurfer feels light and bouncy, with the sole's rocker profile ensuring a smooth transition from footstrike to toe-off. Overall, an outstanding do-it-all shoe – cushioned enough for easy miles, but also light and responsive enough for tempo runs and races of 10K and beyond.

03

ADIDAS ADIZERO SL

TYPE Performance
PRICE £110
WEIGHT 243.25 g (M), 211g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm (M), 8.5mm (W)

ADIDAS' LATEST ADDITION to the high-performance Adizero family is ideal for those looking to smash PBs without breaking the bank. Developed, designed and packed with some of the same ground-breaking technology as the top-of-the-range Adizero models – including Lightstrike Pro foam and a lightweight Lightstrike EVA midsole – the Adizero SL is a performance racer at a considerably lower cost. Of course, the lower price does mean it's missing some premium features – most notably a carbon plate – which may rule it out as a race-day choice for money-no-object edge-chasers. But along with affordability, the SL offers added comfort and versatility over some all-out carbon racers, with testers finding the ride forgiving enough for regular training miles. And they ride fast, too. Our testers found the Lightstrike Pro foam in the forefoot area helped propel them forwards and offered a firm, fast toe-off, while the lightweight midsole provided a stable yet peppy ride. A go-to for speed and tempo sessions that will also serve you well on race days. Just remember to size up as these (like other shoes in the Adizero range) are on the narrow side.

04

HOKA ARAHI 6

TYPE Stability
PRICE £130
WEIGHT 264g (M), 216g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 5mm

HOKA'S ARAHI 6 isn't a particularly 'sexy' shoe – there's no uber-bouncy or uber-fast ride here, but it does its job perfectly: providing over-pronating runners with much-needed structure and support to run long miles niggle-free. The latest Arahi utilises the same J-frame tech as its predecessor – essentially a firmer piece of foam that runs from the medial side and hooks around the heel to the lateral side. This, plus thick midsole cushioning, ensures a stable ride with plenty of shock absorption underfoot – an excellent combo for long, slow runs. Up top, a structured heel counter and plush heel collar offer an extra layer of protection and support. At 216g, the Arahi is noticeably lighter than comparable stability shoes, which makes it a joy on longer runs. Our only gripe is they come up small, so we'd recommend going half a size up.

05

PUMA DEVIATE NITRO ELITE 2

TYPE Performance
PRICE £175
WEIGHT 210g (M), 173g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

WITH EVER-EVOLVING SHOE tech and maximalism dominating the racing category, it's refreshing to see some super shoes going rogue. Models such as Nike's Air Zoom Alphafly are maxed out with towering stack heights, sharp heel spoilers and aggressive silhouettes. In contrast, there are shoes such as this Puma model, which are more pared down, while still offering all the features you'd expect, such as a carbon-fibre plate and responsive midsole foam. Some of our testers had never run in Pumas and found themselves – appropriately – deviating from other brands' super shoes, 'thanks to its lightweight design, firm cushion, subtle but effective propulsion and minimalism', in the words of one. Another was sold on the combo of being 'super-lightweight without losing the comfort factor' and found they 'also gripped well in wet conditions'.

▶

06

NEW BALANCE FUELCELL SUPERCOMP ELITE V3

TYPE Performance

PRICE £220

WEIGHT 227g (M), 181g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 4mm

THE SQUISHY, BOUNCY V2 was a totally different shoe than V1, and the V3 is a complete rebuild again. So, what's new? Well, start with the thick sole that's 40mm under the heel, right at the limits of what's allowed by World Athletics, but 5mm thicker under the forefoot than the V2 (which was 39mm in the heel and 31mm in the forefoot). Despite the extra thickness, it doesn't feel quite as soft and bouncy as before, but it's still 'a good lightweight racer with a responsive forefoot and a cushy heel stack', as one tester summed it up. Helping to keep weight down is the sole construction you find on all the SuperComp family. A deep channel in the foam creates almost a horseshoe shape under the heel. You sink into that empty space a little, which boosts cushioning and allows the curved plate to flatten just slightly under your body weight.

07

NIKE VAPORFLY NEXT% 3

TYPE Performance

PRICE £235

WEIGHT 198g (M), 164g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

ELIUD KIPCHOGE MAY HAVE worn the even-higher-spec Alphafly to break the two-hour barrier, but a glance at the sharp end of any major marathon tells you the Vaporfly is a go-to for many serious racers. And thankfully the third iteration feels just as lively and fast as the previous two. Nike has overhauled the Vaporfly from the rubber up, looking to make it the lightest yet. One attempt to shave weight came in the midsole shaping, with foam now removed from places where it's not needed. Gone, too, is the slab of rubber under the forefoot, replaced with a web of diamond-shaped lugs. Our testers reported the shoes felt planted in dry conditions, and the new construction eliminates the loud, slappy sensation found in almost all the new super shoes. One gripe: the Flyknit upper is extremely thin and breathable, but it doesn't stretch at all, so take care not to lace up too tightly.

08

UNDER ARMOUR FLOW VELOCITI ELITE

TYPE Performance

PRICE £220

WEIGHT 218g (M), 176g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

THIS IS UNDER ARMOUR announcing itself as a serious contender in the super-shoe space. One of the first things you notice is the weight-shaving rubberless bottom. UA's Flow foam is infused with olefin, making it resilient against wear. Despite the absence of an outsole, the Wind grips well on slick surfaces and feels like a track spike with the support of a moderately cushioned trainer. That's how it feels to run in the Velociti Elite, too, but its rubber-less midsole is a lighter Flow compound than in the Wind, infused with nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The midsole also has a full-length thermoset plate with an angular scoop to provide a nice roll off. UA's designers also minimised the upper, called Warp 2.0, by replacing its base mesh with a thin monomesh. Vertical and horizontal tape lines create an exoskeleton over your foot to keep it secure. One tester compared the Velociti Elite's manoeuvrability on the road to sprinting on the track, while another praised the comfort and the fact that, in contrast to other super shoes, 'it doesn't feel heavily contoured or shaped; it doesn't force the foot to mould to the shoe'.

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SAUCONY ENDORPHIN ELITE

TYPE Performance

PRICE £280

WEIGHT 207g (M), 173g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

TO COMMEMORATE TURNING 125 this year, Saucony launched its fastest-ever racing shoe: the Endorphin Elite. As the 'elite' signals, this is the pair you pull out with the intention of maxing your performance on race day. The brand carried out metabolic testing on athletes running at varying speeds and found that, in terms of energy efficiency from 5K to marathon pace, the runners – not all of them elites – had better running economy wearing the Elite compared with other Saucony models. That efficiency comes in part from a new foam, Pwrrun HG ('highest grade'). In lab testing, Saucony found it outperformed the brand's other foams on energy return. Besides energetic foam, any decent super shoe needs a carbon-fibre plate and the Elite's is slotted and shaped like a fork to provide aggressive toe-off. The result is a shoe that testers feel is a true equal to Nike's Alphafly and Vaporfly when it comes to all-out speed. Like Saucony's other racing models, the Endorphin Pro+ and Endorphin Pro 3, the Elite's propulsive ride demands that you run faster. Testers reported that easy four-milers transformed into marathon-paced long runs and the 'indisputable bounce' had them eyeing up extra races.

10

ALTRA RIVERA 3

TYPE Neutral

PRICE £125

WEIGHT 244g (M), 210g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 0mm

PAST VERSIONS OF THE Rivera have garnered praise from testers for the lightweight yet supportive cushioning, but some did report occasionally catching a toe on uneven pavements when tired. With a different feel, the 3 required less caution. The biggest change in this iteration is the increased stack height, and judging by those previous experiences running in zero-drop shoes (ie, scraped knees), that additional 2mm matters. The Rivera 3 rides smoother and softer. It's an ideal option for runners looking for a minimalism-inspired cushioned trainer, or for the zero-drop novice who wants to see what Altra's balanced cushioning is all about. There's plenty of room in the toebox, but some runners may feel a little tightness in the midfoot. The Rivera has Altra's slim foot shape, which is the narrowest shoe form compared with the brand's standard and original lasts. Testers fed back that even though the saddle felt snug, insteps didn't feel like they were being squeezed in a vice, but for wide-footed runners it may be an issue. 'I found the Rivera to be very narrow and snug in the midfoot,' said one tester. 'I actually liked that feeling, but for some it may be too tight.'

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11

BROOKS GHOST 15

TYPE	Neutral
PRICE	£130
WEIGHT	278g (M), 221g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP	12mm

FOR OVER A DECADE, the Ghost 15 has been a reliable go-to for new runners and those looking for a comfortable everyday shoe. Our testers confirmed its continued reliability, calling the 15 'a tried-and-true daily trainer'. The midsole hits the sweet spot. 'The cushioning felt just right,' commented one tester. 'Firm, but at the same time I could feel a little sponginess to it.' That 'sponginess' is the soft give that adapts to the bottom of your foot, as the foam's firmness provides support and shock absorption. DNA Loft V2, which is compression-moulded EVA, was previously used in the Glycerin 19 midsole. This version is just as soft but weighs in lighter.

In a world of carbon-fibre plate propulsion and towering stack heights for our fast miles, the Ghost is that other shoe, the dependable trainer we rely on for all the other runs. It's not a speedwork demon, it's a throwback to ignoring the clock and getting lost in the run. 'There's something to be said for just putting on a shoe, going out for a run and letting your mind relax after a stressful day,' said one tester. 'The Ghost's ride allowed me to do that – to simply enjoy the run itself.' High praise indeed.

12

BROOKS HYPERION MAX

TYPE	Performance
PRICE	£160
WEIGHT	213g (M), 164g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP	8mm

A NEW ADDITION TO Brooks' excellent Hyperion speed series, the highly cushioned Hyperion Max is a real crowd-pleaser. The Hyperion midsole offering has evolved considerably since 2019's first Hyperion Elite, which featured Brook's DNA Zero foam. This was replaced with DNA Flash in the Hyperion Tempo Elite for a softer, bouncier ride; and the Hyperion Max is the Tempo's more cushioned, yet ever-so-slightly lighter sibling. And while their secure and comfortable stretch woven uppers are the same, their rides underfoot are anything but. Brooks has jacked up the Max's midsole with an extra 4mm of nitrogen-infused DNA Flash foam to create a springier yet plusher ride. It went down very well with our testers and the good news is that the inside word from Brooks is this same foam will be used in its future Ghost and Glycerin models, opening up the experience across the range. Testers said they felt the Hyperion Max is perfect for Sunday long runs, but at the same time it still feels fast. So much so that testers also saw it as a carbon-plate-less, and less costly, alternative to a marathon racing super shoe.

13

ALTRA VIA OLYMPUS

TYPE Max-cushioned
PRICE £129
WEIGHT 295g (M), 241g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 0mm

AN UBER-CUSHIONED run-forever ride – running in the luxe upper atop the plush insole feels as soft and smooth as melting butter. Inspired by its trail namesake, which also offered a lightweight, responsive ride despite its burly exterior, the road iteration took three different compounds and three different types of geometries to get right. The Via also has notes of the Paradigm, Altra's cushiest stability trainer, and the Timp 4, another max-cushioned trail shoe. The midsole is Ego Max, an EVA-based compression-moulded foam also found in those models. The Paradigm, however, has a flatter, more linear profile, and is built on Altra's standard last. In contrast, the Via's sole is curved to promote a rocker motion, and its foot shape is wider and more accommodating. The moulded heel collar and pillowy tongue amplify the comfort. The Via's outsole also has less ground contact than the Paradigm, as Altra has chipped away the outsole rubber to reduce weight. While on paper still relatively heavy, the Via Olympus feels surprisingly light and smooth and tempts you to quicken the pace. Chalk it up to that propulsive rocker roll and all-encompassing memory-foam feel.

14

ASICS SUPERBLAST

TYPE Performance
PRICE £210
WEIGHT 244g (M), 204g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

WORLD ATHLETICS CAPS shoes' race legal stack height at 40mm. But there's no limit on your training shoes. The Superblast towers at 45.5mm in the heel, making it Asics' tallest and most cushioned shoe. Of course, more foam means more weight, but it still feels light on foot. Asics achieves this by combining its two most responsive midsole foams. The majority of the midsole is the Turbo version of Flytefoam Blast, used in the brand's racing MetaSpeed models. Underneath is a thinner layer of Plus formula, a softer and more forgiving cushion. However, the Superblast has a firmer ride than you think. 'I was expecting the shoe to be a lot bouncier and more flexible, however it was surprisingly rigid,' said one tester. 'This made it feel more responsive, so I could wear it for speedwork but still get the benefits of a lot of cushion.'

15

NIKE INVINCIBLE 3

TYPE Max-cushioned
PRICE £169.95
WEIGHT 280g (M), 230g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 9mm (M), 8.4mm (W)

NIKE'S SUPER-CUSHIONED trainer returns with a facelift and all the bouncy goodness we've come to love. The third iteration boasts thicker stacks of ZoomX foam – the midsole material used in the Vaporfly and Alphafly racing shoes – than you'll find anywhere else. The foam is lighter, softer and more responsive than other compounds, returning about 70% of energy with each footstrike. And the huge slab used in the Invincible led one tester to call them her 'sproing-sproing shoes'. The previously thick (and hot) Flyknit upper has been replaced with a sleek version that breathes far better. Plus, all the bulky pillowing that lined the collar of the first two versions has gone. Our test team cherished them for recovery runs and easy jogs – the kind of running that should make up 75% of your mileage.

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16

TRACKSMITH ELIOT

TYPE Neutral
PRICE £198
WEIGHT 261g (M), 226g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm

THE FIRST FORAY into footwear from the high-end US apparel outfit serves up its signature blend of modern performance and running heritage. Beneath its classic styling, the Eliot utilises the same bouncy Supercritical Pebax midsole foam found in super shoes. But while the Eliot certainly doesn't feel hard, don't expect that lively, springy sensation you get from other Pebax-based shoes. The 10mm drop is a higher offset than many modern shoes, but Tracksmith felt it offered the most classic geometry for an everyday trainer. Testers found the shoe rolled fluidly, while also appreciating 'the lovely sense of engagement with the surface that bigger shoes don't offer'. Others found them 'slightly on the firm side', but 'snappy and super comfortable'. Many felt a sense of rediscovering the best elements of classic running shoes. The only real gripe was the price.

17

ADIDAS ULTRABOOST LIGHT

TYPE Neutral
PRICE £170
WEIGHT 292g (M), 240g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm

BACK IN 2013, Adidas fired the first shot in the foam wars with Boost. Bouncy, durable and soft, it was a step ahead of popularly used EVA. The only downside was that it was heavy. The 10th-anniversary upgrade, Ultraboost Light, is 30% lighter than the original Boost, but with similar chemistry to the original. This model might not be featherweight compared with today's shoes, but it's lighter and easier to steer on long runs. 'Compared with the first-generation Boost, this feels much more stable,' said one tester. Some stability comes from the foam itself, which still uses TPU beads, though now infused with firmer EVA.
We ascribe the rest to a stiffened portion of the midsole. The high sock-style upper remains a matter of preference, though. Some found it supportive and loved the stretchy wrap around their ankles. Others said it slid and rubbed their achilles.

18

LULULEMON BLISSFEEL 2

TYPE Neutral
PRICE £138
WEIGHT 252g (W)
HEEL-TOE DROP 9.5mm

THE DEBUT OF THE women-specific Blissfeel last year was good enough to establish Lululemon as a serious running brand alongside its yoga and cross-training heritage. But if you still need convincing, let the second iteration persuade you. Blissfeel 2.0 is the same weight as its predecessor, yet it feels slightly heavier and firmer, even though the stack height and foam are unchanged. Running in the 2 felt like running in Adidas' Ultraboost. It's thickset, but there's plenty of pop to the ride. The toe room and cushioning felt like a reprieve after testing narrower, less supportive trainers. A new upper design, which adds contoured anatomical zones on its three textile layers and resembles fingerprints or elevation lines on a topography map, provides flexibility with a 3D-moulded midfoot panel to provide greater hold in that area. This neutral shoe is ideal for recovery days or for runners who want more support and firmer cushioning. One tester reported feeling fine in the forgiving Blissfeel, despite a right achilles that really needed a day off, and while no shoe stops you getting injured, they commented, 'You know a shoe is good when you somehow don't suffer any repercussions from making poor choices.'

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ASICS GEL-CUMULUS 25

TYPE Neutral

PRICE £140

WEIGHT 266g (M), 218g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

GEL-KAYANO, Gel-Cumulus, Gel-Nimbus. These titans share a first name, and it just got an upgrade. Pure Gel is the lighter, softer version of the brand's hallmark cushioning. It's still heavier than midsole foam, so used in workhorse trainers rather than racing models, but not much is needed to reap its benefits. Asics puts a small wedge in the heel to smooth landings and absorb shock without weighing you down. You won't see the squishy gel peeking out like in prior versions, as Pure Gel blends with the rest of the midsole, now made of Flytefoam Blast+. Swapping in the light, springy foam lets Asics add 4mm to the midsole, but actually reduce weight from the previous version. This is the most cushioned Cumulus yet. It actually feels a lot like earlier versions of its ultra-plush cousin, the Nimbus. (Asics added even more foam to the new Nimbus, so it remains the cushier choice.) Still, neither is geared for speed days. Testers said the Cumulus felt surprisingly light for its 'thick and foamy' workhorse sole, but does sacrifice some pep underfoot. 'I didn't feel rocked on to my toes or pushed forwards, but it's one of the most comfortable shoes I've worn,' said one tester. 'The inside feels plush and the secure lacing really hugs your foot.'

20

HOKA CLIFTON 9

TYPE Max-cushioned

PRICE £130

WEIGHT 248g (M), 205g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 5mm

ONCE A HIGH-STACK trailblazer, Hoka's Clifton 9 now sits in a well-populated category of max-cushioned running shoes and this latest iteration has seen some work put in under the chassis to ensure it's not superseded by the competition. Packing in an extra 3mm of stack height while also boasting a marginal weight shaving, the Clifton 9 offers an easygoing and supremely comfortable ride. All the elements that made the previous versions a firm (or should that be soft?) favourite remain and many have been tweaked and improved upon: the rocker profile encourages you forwards even on easy days; the tweaked EVA foam feels plush underfoot; the swoop-back heel counter and upper lock the foot in for a secure fit. The elements that sometimes let Hoka down have been addressed, too. The shoe doesn't feel too narrow in a regular width and fits truer to size on all testers (though going up half a size from your normal is still recommended). The Clifton 9 offers all runners a comfy, cushioned and versatile ride and, at £130, it's still sitting pretty among its closest (and more expensive) rivals.

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GEL-NIMBUS
PureGEL
FF Blast+

21

ASICS GEL NIMBUS 25

TYPE Neutral

PRICE £175

WEIGHT 290g (M), 255g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

THE LONG-RUNNING Gel-Nimbus is one of Asics' bestselling and best-loved shoes, and the 24th iteration scooped our Best in Test Award last year, but none of that stopped Asics going for a full-scale reinvention. Even before you get under the bonnet and into the specs, you can see it looks like a very different shoe. Up top, there's a new, stretchy knit tongue and collar construction for a more adaptive fit, which testers reported feels 'snug, secure and almost sock-like'. Geometry has shifted significantly, with an 8mm drop compared with the 24's 13mm. The midsole uses 20% more foam and has upgraded to the lightweight, energetic FF Blast Plus Eco cushioning, while there's also new Pure Gel Technology cleverly embedded between the upper and midsole for added shock absorption. Ambitiously dubbed 'the most comfortable shoe ever' by Asics, it certainly impressed our testers. One enjoyed 'how plush it felt', adding that it 'feels soft underfoot, and has a smooth, rolling transition'. Although the 25 feels peppier than the 24, it's certainly very much built for comfort over speed. The most comfortable shoe ever? That's really a subjective call for individual runners, but it's certainly damn comfy.

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PUMA VELOCITY NITRO 2

TYPE Neutral

PRICE £100

WEIGHT 257g (M), 207g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm

AFTER A NUMBER of wilderness years, Puma's return to the running footwear game continues on great form with this upgrade to an already excellent daily trainer. While you would generally suggest the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' approach with a shoe that worked as well as the original Velocity Nitro, the tweaks do add something new. Or, in the case of the first model's slightly pointless plastic heel clip, which has now gone, remove something old. More significantly, the composition of the midsole has been changed, with more of the softer Nitro foam now packed into the heel. Yet despite the increased softness in the cushioning and added comfort, the net result is actually to both make the shoe a touch lighter and to make it feel noticeably snappier on toe-off. It's a really lively ride – with the added bonus of a surprisingly good outsole grip and a nice, reflective upper to improve visibility on night/early morning runs. This is an everyday shoe that could nevertheless also handle – and handle well – speed workouts, tempo runs and long runs. Weigh all that against the price and it's great value for money, too.

23

NEW BALANCE FUELCELL REBEL V3

TYPE Performance

PRICE £130

WEIGHT 209g (M), 164g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 6mm

THIS PLATE-FREE performance offering feels like a more cushioned version of a traditional racing shoe. Packing in a bit more of New Balance's FuelCell midsole material than the V2, the V3 delivers a lively but forgiving ride. The midsole bounce, full-foot flexibility and gentle forefoot rocker combine to make it feel very peppy, with testers feeling it was particularly suited to tempo efforts, but also quick enough to race in. Plate-less and much lower to the ground than max-stack super shoes, the Rebel offers a more natural ground feel, which will appeal to purists and more mindful runners. It also feels stable (with a slightly wider platform than the V2) and the breathable mesh upper locks the foot in place well. There's added comfort up there, too, with significantly more padding than you get in often overly stripped-back racing models and a plush, gusseted tongue. That, combined with the midsole cushion, means its versatile enough for you to take the foot off the pedal and go a little longer, too. Some testers did experience minor grip issues in the wet, but overall the Rebel gets an awful lot right with a price tag that could make you reconsider how much you really need carbon in your footprint.

24

ASICS GEL KAYANO 29

TYPE Stability

PRICE £175

WEIGHT 298g (M), 270g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 10mm

WHEN TOSHIKAZU KAYANO began a special project 29 years ago, inspiration came from the stag beetle's armour-like exoskeleton, leading to burly crisscrossing overlays on early models. Today, Asics' premium road-stability model remains sturdy, but it's shed much of that hard plastic over the years. Layered on top and through the toe is soft and bouncy FlyteFoam Blast+, and the heel clip gets a trim, resulting in the lightest Kayano ever, by some 14g. It still delivers an extremely stable ride, but more of its support comes baked into the upper and outsole, rather than the midsole. The upper is a tightly woven knit and the interior has been reinforced to guide your foot back to centre, while extra medial-side outsole rubber acts like a less intrusive post or guide rail. Our testers praised the shoe's inherent supportiveness.

25

SAUCONY RIDE 16

TYPE Neutral

PRICE £130

WEIGHT 252g (M), 201g (W)

HEEL-TOE DROP 8mm

HOW DO YOU KEEP a much-loved workhorse trainer relevant in a sea of lightning-fast shoes? Simple. Don't mess with it. Fans of the Ride are loyal to a familiar fit and feel, so Saucony keeps this legend fairly consistent year to year, while massaging in its latest shoe tech. The Ride 15 switched to a new Pwrrun EVA midsole, reformulated with bouncy polymers, and added a plush 7mm thick sockliner. Both updates boost cushion while cutting weight, and they carry over to the 16. 'The Ride met all my running needs: a cushioned semi-soft ride, comfortable lacing and a flexible upper,' said one tester. Without Saucony's glitzier tech, the Ride relies on a carefully sculpted midsole. Higher sidewalls cradle your foot inside – not on top of – the cushioning, which helps keep you stable. 'Aptly named, the Ride 16 provides just that, a great ride,' a tester said.

Starting in Kendal, the loop takes you past Garburn Pass, Lake Windermere, forests and nature reserves before heading back to base camp

A LONG WEEKEND IN THE LAKES

Lily Canter trades in a Romanian ultra for a two-day 100k challenge in the Lake District

IT WASN'T DRACULA'S PLAYGROUND, but a 2,500m climb through the Lake District was a rewarding substitute. Early in 2020, my running buddy and I signed up for a 100km ultra in the Carpathian Mountains, Romania.

We had to defer our place for two years due to Covid, then, this spring, we discovered the race was on the Ukrainian border. We cancelled, but we'd put in the training so signed up for the Ultra Challenge Lake District, which had a similar amount of elevation. The race – tagged walk, jog or run – can be completed over two days or as one continuous 100km. We opted for 50km a day and stayed at a youth hostel on the edge of Lake Windermere at the halfway mark.

The previous year, we'd attempted 100km in Snowdonia. This was self-supported and slow going. We got lost several times and often found ourselves knee-deep in marshland. So a marked route, with checkpoints and lashings of food, sounded luxurious. The event is part of Action Challenge, which offers individual, charity and corporate adventures in the UK and worldwide. Since 1999, its events have raised more than £90m for charity.

The race offers full support and hospitality, along with optional camping and hostels. You can also opt to go for the half or quarter distance

The Lake District challenge, which attracts 1,500 participants, is very well staffed with caterers, podiatrists, medics and masseuses, plus checkpoints every 10 to 15km. We started in the 8am wave on a perfectly overcast Saturday in Kendall. The first 10km covered rolling hills along roads and paths in the Longsleddale Valley. We passed

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ULTRA CHALLENGE

hundreds of walkers and soon realised we'd started in the wrong wave.

At the first checkpoint, my eyes lit up at the array of food on display – including vegan offerings, pineapples, oranges, pastries, energy bars, nuts, sweets, plus tea and coffee. I was in ultra heaven. I also realised I was carrying far too much of my own food.

The next section forced us to stop running at our steady pace as we scrambled up the stony Garburn Pass. Hurtling downhill was a mountain bike race and suddenly a rider crashed in front of us. Fortunately, only his pride was dented.

As we reached the brow of the hill, we were excited about the descent until we turned a corner and were battered by the wind. This was the story of the weekend, where we came to dread downhill sections and look forward to taking a break to walk uphill and breathe in the stunning scenery.

Grabbing a load of sweets from the pick 'n' mix bar, we hit the last 8km of day one. This was the most technical terrain we'd encountered as we edged along a narrow, tree-root-ridden lakeside path. With a barbed-wire fence on the right and brambles to our left, our pace dropped dramatically. We let out a collective cheer when we hit the road, only to start swearing minutes later when, at 45km, we had a long 16% incline to endure.

Back into the tricky woods and I stumbled for the fourth time that day. Our legs were tired and we weren't best pleased when we passed the 50km marker and the finish line was nowhere to be seen. Finally, 500m later, we came into the halfway camp where we grabbed a curry and a 20-minute massage.

As we were recovering in our shared hostel room, a walker came bursting in at around 8pm with the words, 'F-ing hell that was hard!' It seemed a fitting end to the day.

The next morning, we hit the trails early at 6am. I removed most of the food from my vest and took a gamble that I wouldn't need my coat. The second day was far less difficult (except for a 1km nettle run) and took in moorland, woodland and fields – there was also a considerable increase in road. We had 360-degree views across Grange-over-Sands as we climbed Hampsfell, before we took in the flatter terrain along the Lyth Valley. By 80km, we were both having sporadic energy wobbles, but managed to shove down gels and keep moving. The hardest part was a horrendously flat stretch along a tedious road for 5km and we sighed in relief when we finally came to a hill. Passing broken, blister-ridden walkers who'd hiked through the night crystallised our opinion that running the event was far more sensible.

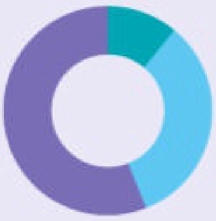
The last 10km stretch included a climb of Scout Scar, but as the wind and rain came in, the views of the southern Lakes were shrouded in cloud. Eventually, we reached the end of our loop, descending into Kendall and a wiggly route through the town.

As we crossed the finish line, we were shocked to learn we were second and third female, having completed the race in 14:28:01. We were rewarded with a glass of bubbly, burger and chips, and a painful massage. It wasn't Draculian Romania, but it was still a bloody good way to spend a weekend.

The next Ultra Challenge Lake District takes place on 10-11 June. ultrachallenge.com/lake-district-challenge

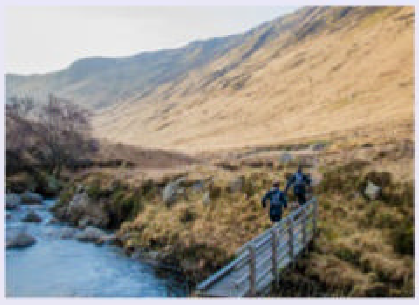
THE RUNDOWN

Ultra Challenge Lake District two-day 100k (2022)
First man: Bernard Mifsud, 12:56:35
First woman: Lu Teagle, 13:21:22
No. of starters/ finishers 202/158



Finishing stats:
● < 20:00 11%
● 20:00-24:59 33%
● > 25:00 56%

Like this? Try... three more multi-day ultras



ULTRA TOUR OF ARRAN

A two-day, off-road adventure on the Scottish Isle of Arran, covering 60 miles through dense forests and mountain ranges with magnificent coastal views.
Arran, 1-2 April 2023 ratraceevents.co.uk

RACE TO THE STONES

A beautiful, two-day 100km route across the mystical Wiltshire countryside from Lewknor to Avebury stone circle.
Wiltshire, 8-9 July 2023 thresholdtrailseries.com

ULTRA X WALES

A challenging but stunning five-day event covering 250km from the northern Cambrian mountains to southern Snowdonia.
Machynlleth, Wales, August 2023 (date TBC) ultra-x.co

THE START LIST

Our selection of the best, fastest, toughest, quirkiest and most enjoyable UK races this month

Key

Road

Trail

Urban

Rural

Flat

Hilly

Malvern Hills Ultra

Colwall, Herefordshire, 6 May

At this event, pacers are not called pacers. They are Time Lords, a moniker we like very much indeed, even if they don't possess the ability to whisk you through time and space directly to the finish line. It's quite a task, being a Time Lord for an ultra event: after 11, 12 or 13 hours running with someone, you'll probably know them better than you know yourself. Is that a good thing? We're not sure. Choose between 22, 30, 37 and 45-milers, all of which are hilly and tough (the 45-miler involves just under 3,000m of ascent). *ultrarunningltd.co.uk*

Crocodile 8

Burghill, Herefordshire, 28 May

The great majority of races are geared towards early birds who have no problem being ready to go by 9am. The Crocodile 8 is a multi-terrain race of around 8.8 miles with a start time that will suit all the night owls out there: it begins at a sleep-in-friendly time of 3pm. You'll need the rest, because the route comes with plenty of sharp inclines and descents on a mixture of tarmac, trails and woodland. *wyevalleyrunners.co.uk*

WYE VALLEY RUNNERS
32

Isle of Jura Fell Race

Craighouse, Argyllshire, 27 May

Don't even think of signing up for this one unless you have plenty of experience with navigation and unmarked fell races in difficult conditions, because that's what you'll be getting here as you cover some 28km and around 2,370m of ascent. Getting to Jura is part of the challenge and limited accommodation means you may be camping. But in exchange for such minor discomforts, you'll get a unique, brilliant race. *isleofjurafellrace.co.uk*

Carlisle City Urban Trail

Carlisle, Cumbria, 10 May

It's rare to find a race that combines the adrenaline rush of a city-centre start with the pleasure of running on trail in the countryside, but this event has managed it quite impressively. After a start at Carlisle Cathedral, the route goes around Carlisle Castle and then winds over and back around the River Eden, and through Bitts Park and Rickerby Park. There are a few small hills, but this 10K is generally quite flat. *sportinaction.co.uk*

Kintyre Way Ultra

Tayinloan, Argyllshire, 13 May

Can you manage the entire Kintyre Way Ultra? Don't worry if not, because there's an option to split the 56km route into three and do it as a relay with two others. The terrain is varied, from beaches to forests to hill paths, and should offer views of neighbouring islands. The route changes every year, so you can come back for a new, equally beautiful experience. *kintyrewayultra.org*

Happy Valley Trail Half Marathon

Bollington, Cheshire, 14 May

Both the 10K and half-marathon options take you past a much-loved icon of Bollington – the white circular building called White Nancy, now Grade II listed. It's around 5.5 metres tall and was built over 200 years ago as a summer residence for a local family. Either that, or it was a folly. The bad news is that you'll probably be quite out of breath when you get to its position at the top of Kerridge Hill – and that's not the only ascent on this tough, sometimes rocky trail race with some 770m of ascent in total. Thank goodness for the two aid stations along the way. *bollingtonharriers.co.uk*

Mow Cop Killer Mile

Mow Cop, Cheshire, 11 May

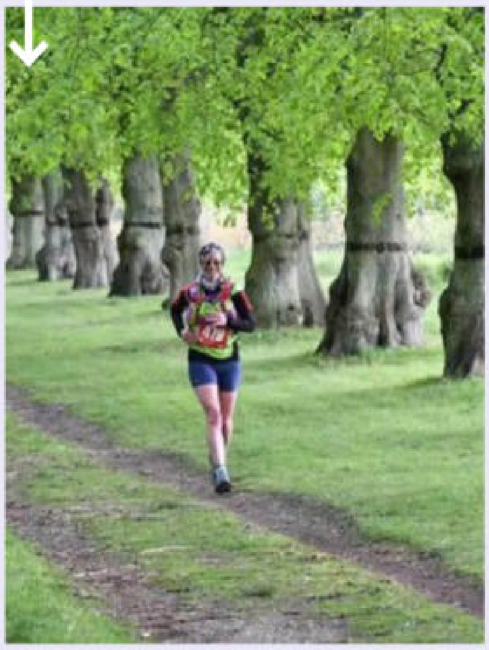
The name elicits a double take every time, but, rest assured, no lawn-tending police officers will be injured at this event. The town is Mow Cop and the race is its infamous Killer Mile, a glorious, quad-shredding, spirit-crushing, tear-inducing heave up a very big hill – and that's it. You'll be thundering up Station Road towards Mow Cop Castle on an incline that ranges from a relatively manageable 5% or so at the

ALL RACES GOING AHEAD AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS start to a rather terrifying section of between 20% and 25% by the end. In total, you'll gain some 165m or so – every single step of this event is uphill. *unabc.co.uk*

Dukeries 40

Walesby, Nottinghamshire, 6 May

Here's a great event that would be really suitable for any runner who's starting to get a little ultra-curious: there's a 30-mile event in addition to the headline 40-miler, so it's only a small (although still challenging) step up from a marathon. Both events start in Sherwood Forest before moving to the vast Clumber Park, so the routes are largely on forest trails surrounded by beautiful, calming trees. With a 10.5-hour cut-off, this event is not suitable for walkers, but there will be plenty of well-stocked checkpoints to keep you going when things get tough. *hobopace.co.uk*



Road to the Isles Marathon and Festival of Running

Arisaig, Inverness-shire, 6 May

Arisaig may be on the Scottish mainland, but that doesn't mean it's easy to get to. It's still a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Glasgow, but it'll absolutely be worth the effort once you see the rugged hills, the windswept but perfect beaches and (hopefully) the sun shining over the many nearby lochs. There's a race for everyone, too: a 5K, a 10K, a half and a marathon, all of which come with wonderful views of the Scottish countryside. There's even a walking event along the half-marathon route for those family members you dragged along who don't like running. *mallaigleisure.org.uk*

WORDS: STEPHEN GLENNON. PHOTOGRAPHY: HARSHARN GILL

RW POLL

Moments before a race begins, which of these are you more likely to be doing?

28%
Focusing on calming yourself down

13%
Focusing on hyping yourself up

59%
A strange mixture of both hyping and calming

Based on a Twitter poll with 167 votes

RW ONLINE RACE LISTINGS

Thirsty for more? Go to runnersworld.com/uk and click 'Events' for the UK's most comprehensive race database, where you can search over 4,500 races by location, terrain, distance and more.

Seskinore Forest 5K Run and Walk

Seskinore, Co Tyrone, 13 May

This is a small and charming community event in the countryside south of Omagh. Seskinore Forest is a lovely place to run, densely populated with a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees, and it has plenty of trails winding back and forth throughout. Bearing in mind that the name is derived from the Irish for 'large bog', it's very possible that this will be a rather squelchy run/walk if the weather has been rainy beforehand. Which, let's be realistic here, it probably will have been. *athleticsni.org*

Stanhill Fell Race

Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, 23 May

A throwback event here: no online entries, just a fiver on the night for the opportunity to run five miles – with around 250m of ascent – in the lovely Lancashire countryside. The run starts and ends at The Britannia pub between Blackburn and Oswaldtwistle and immediately ventures offroad, across grassy fields, through gravelled farmyards, over marshy bogs and, of course, up hills – often with no discernible path. It really looks like tremendous fun. *ukresults.net*

Radyr and Morganstown Trail Half Marathon and Trail Marathon

Radyr, Glamorgan, 13 May

A couple of challenging trail events here, but at least they're easy to get to. Radyr is in the northwestern outskirts of Cardiff, and the start points are just a short walk from the train station. Just as well getting there is a breeze, because the half and the marathon are anything but. Both involve reaching the top of Garth mountain – the star of the Hugh Grant film *The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down A Mountain* – and other less famous ascents, too. To give you an idea, the marathon cut-off time is eight hours. *ridgerunners.co.uk*

Race the Tide

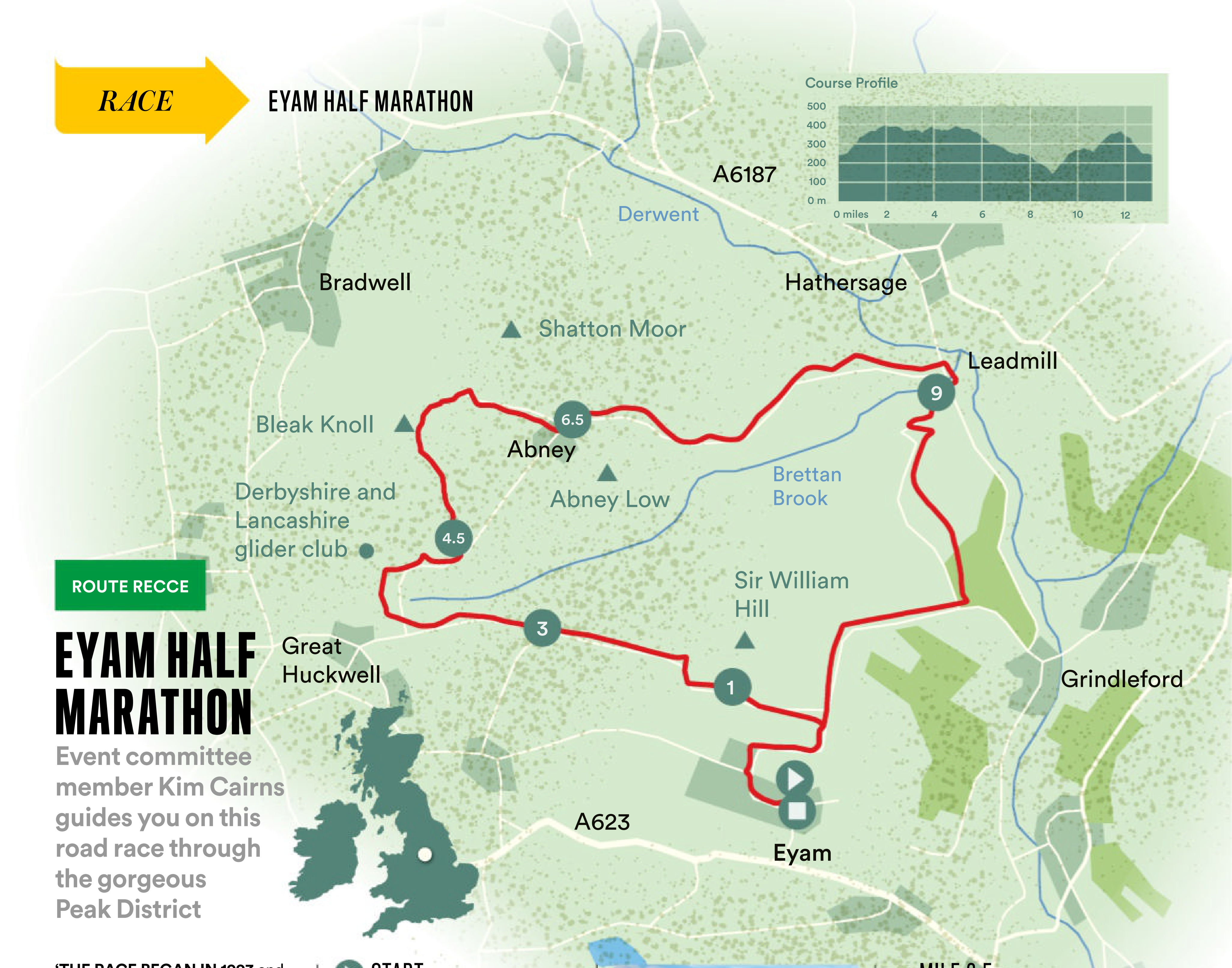
Mothecombe, Devon, 20 May

Take on a long marathon (just under 29 miles), a long half marathon (15.5 miles) or an 8.5-miler through the Devon hills and along the Devon coastline, with wet feet almost guaranteed for all of them as you cross an estuary of the River Erme. The wetness is likely to be proportionate to how quick you are, because the tide cares little for the meagre efforts of puny humans. It will come in and it will go out, and we will either be in the way or not. In the grander scheme of things, what is a wet foot when compared with the immense privilege of witnessing Mother Nature in all her glory? *outeredge-events.com*

ROUTE RECCE

EYAM HALF MARATHON

Event committee member Kim Cairns guides you on this road race through the gorgeous Peak District

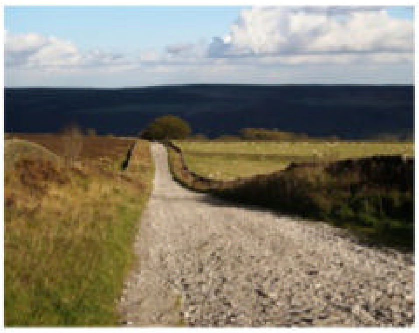


'THE RACE BEGAN IN 1993 and is still organised by volunteers as a local charity fundraiser,' says Cairns. 'Despite road subsidence and Covid causing the odd cancellation, we've been running it ever since. We describe it as one of the most scenic road races in the country, as it heads through the stunning Peak District. Between 400 and 500 entrants now follow the route, which is also known as the Rat Race, due to the history of the plague associated with the village. Walkers can also follow the race route and, after the half marathon has started, there's a kids' race in a nearby field. For anyone who doesn't know this part of Derbyshire, it's a great introduction, with a route through some stunning countryside. It's a firm favourite with local runners, too, because of its friendly atmosphere.'

This year's race is on 14 May. For more details, visit eyamhalfmarathon.org.uk

START

Runners gather in the centre of Eyam. This village remains well-known today after its inhabitants in 1665 decided to self-isolate from nearby communities to stop the spread of bubonic plague. You'll run past its museum that explains more about this fascinating story.



MILE 1

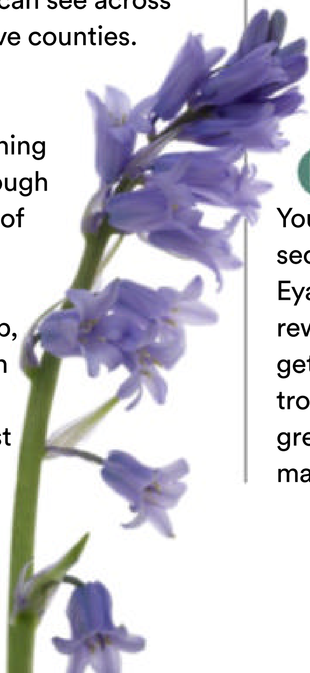
After completing a loop of the village, you begin a steep ascent of Sir William Hill. Although the identity of the eponymous dignitary is now lost to history, you're unlikely to forget the hill itself, which is 429m to its summit.

MILE 3

You're now following the closed road across the plateau and will pass the historic Barrel Inn in the hamlet of Bretton. This section is especially stunning, as on a clear day you can see across the dales into five counties.

MILE 4.5

Here you're running on the road through a woodland full of bluebells. You'll also pass the local gliding club, which opened in 1935, making it one of the oldest in the country.



MILE 6.5

Expect an enthusiastic welcome as you snake through Abney village, which sits high above the Hope Valley. It also marks the start of over three miles of descent through more of the Peak District National Park.

MILE 9

Although it might be tempting, you won't be stopping at the Plough Inn beside the main road, but instead will start another tough climb. Heading away from the River Derwent, you'll scale Leam Hill.

FINISH

You end with a satisfying downhill section that takes you back into Eyam. Once over the line, you'll be rewarded with a T-shirt, and if you get a top placing, a rat-inspired trophy, too. Relax on the village green and refuel from one of the many refreshment places close by.

WORDS: ADRIAN MONTI. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY. ILLUSTRATION: HARVEY SYMONS

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TURMERIC+
keeps Mark on track

Mark Wishart, 45, has been taking Turmeric+ as part of his active lifestyle, which revolves around running. He loves taking part in everything from park runs to marathons.

104
69702
Mark

"Within days of taking Turmeric+ I could tell the **difference**."

'I was running occasionally and people suggested I join a club. It took off from there,' he says. 'The people I've met through running have been brilliant.'

But Mark started experiencing issues that held him back and looked for ways to get back to normal. 'Within days of taking Turmeric+ I could tell the difference. It was hard to believe it could just happen like that,' he says.

Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, is difficult for the body to absorb. Some turmeric products offer high levels of curcumin but unless this is easily absorbed by the body, the higher amounts make little difference.

The need for easy absorption is what led the scientists at FutureYou Cambridge to create Turmeric+ using a patented 'Curcuma Phospholipid Complex' formulation, which is thirty times more absorbable than standard turmeric. Turmeric+ contains vitamin C, which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage, as well as contributing to the protection of cells from oxidative stress. Intensive workouts are a well-known source of oxidative stress in muscles so this is also combined with vitamin D which contributes to normal muscle function.

Mark has tried stopping the turmeric supplements to see whether they were really having an effect. 'There have been times when I've actually stopped using it for a period of time, like when I went on holiday. I've noticed the difference when I stop and when I start taking it again. It's literally that quick a turnaround.'

Adam Cleevely, Chair of FutureYou Cambridge comments; "We're delighted to hear our Turmeric+ is helping people stay active. We want to support more people to become or stay active, whether you're an elite athlete, or simply enjoy sport socially, we think Turmeric+ can play an important role in that journey."

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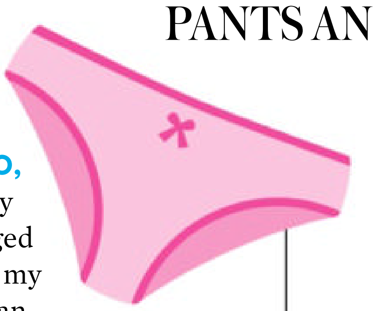
I'M A RUNNER

HELEN THORN

THE COMEDIAN AND AUTHOR, 44, ON RUNNING IN HER PANTS AND SLEEPING NEXT TO CHICKEN KEBABS



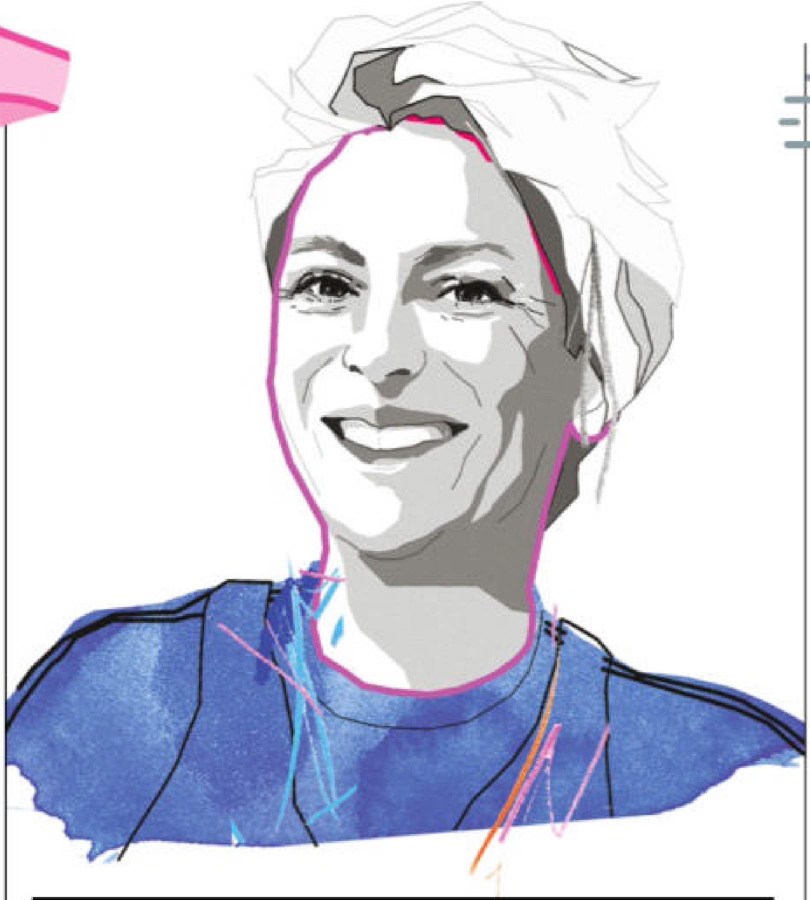
FIVE YEARS AGO, my friend, Bryony Gordon, challenged me to run 10K in my pants. It was for an event called 'Celebrate You', and I thought it sounded like a really ace idea. It's quite an extreme introduction to running, but I'm a little bit of a show-off, so it was probably the right path in for me!

I LOVED RUNNING STRAIGHT AWAY. I loved the online community – it doesn't matter how fast you are, how old you are, how far you run; there's a cheer squad there for you. I found it really encouraging and all the fears and misconceptions I'd had about running melted away very quickly.

I DON'T LIKE RUNNING WITH OTHER PEOPLE, THOUGH. I like the solitude of it. When I started running, my kids were quite little, and it was a great excuse to get out of the house and just get some headspace. Also, my job is all about being outward rather than inward, so I enjoy that it's just something for me, even in races. The first time I ran a marathon, I ran with friends for the first 5km, then I was just like, 'No. Sorry, bye!'

MY DAD WAS A RUNNER. He was really fast and ran every day up until his fifties – probably just to get away from us, which I now understand! He's 87 and I really love sharing running with him now.

RUNNING CULTURE WAS VERY PRESENT WHEN I WAS GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA, but I thought I wasn't built to be a runner. I was strong and very good at netball, hockey and football. I played a different sport every night, but when it came to running, I just didn't feel like that long, lean, swishy-pony-tailed sort of girl.



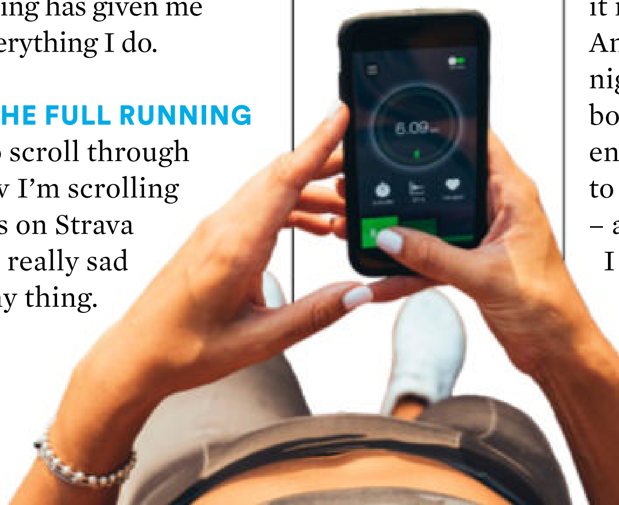
I'VE GOT NOISIER AS I'VE GOT FASTER. I never thought I would be one of those runners, but it turns out I am. Occasionally, you just make weird noises on the run, too. I like wearing big headphones so I can't hear myself fart. That's a joy, really.

> 'Running is a great excuse to get out of the house and just get some headspace'

● **Helen Thorn** is a comedian, bestselling author and co-host of the *Scummy Mummies* podcast, scummymummies.com

RUNNING HAS HELPED TO CHANGE MY LIFE DRAMATICALLY. It's not just the physical changes, although they're a nice benefit. When I joined Instagram, about five years ago, my handle was @helenwearsasize18. I'm not that size now, so I had to change it. But I get high off getting faster, the extra energy I have and how I feel when I get out of bed or the shower, rather than what size dress I am. Running has given me confidence in everything I do.

I'VE BECOME THE FULL RUNNING DORK. I used to scroll through dating apps, now I'm scrolling through my stats on Strava and Garmin. It's really sad but also a healthy thing.



MY MARATHON TIME has gone from 5:56 to 4:14, and now I'm aiming for 3:45 because the goal is to qualify and get to Boston. It's all about the cliches... If you'd told me three years ago this is where I'd be, I'd have told you to eff off. I feared failure, I had low expectations and was happy to plod, but now here I am, talking about negative splits.

I RECENTLY JOINED A RUNNING CLUB. That's next level shit! Running on a track with really fast runners. But you don't have to talk to anyone, especially when you're doing 5x500m sprints. There's no chance you can talk. It's fantastic. A friend of mine joined before me and he told me, 'You get to know everyone's pants.' And I said, 'Erm, what do you mean?' He said, 'No, the way they breathe.' I was glad he clarified that.

IT'S A REAL BUZZ when women write to me to say, 'I ran today because you posted about running.' I think it's because I didn't start out as a size 10; they know from my journey that it's possible. That I didn't look like I do now and it's been slow and gradual.

MY LIFE IS MENTAL. One night I'm in Norwich, and the next I'm in Brighton. Plus, I'm a single parent. I'm all over the place, so I can't really tell people to do what I do; I just have to fit it in however I can. And then some nights, I drink two bottles of wine and end up sleeping next to a chicken kebab – and that is something I really wouldn't recommend to anyone!

INTERVIEW: BEN HOBSON; RICK PEARSON. ILLUSTRATION: PADDY MILLS AT SYNERGY ART. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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